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Nikolaus Pevsner: art history, nation, and exile

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Abstract

Shortly after losing his teaching position at Göttingen University in September 1933, Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983) travelled to England as a refugee from National Socialist Germany. Thanks to his prodigious energy and ambition, his career flourished, and at the time of his death in 1983 he had become a national institution and the preeminent expert on British architecture. The emotional and scholarly transition from Adolf Hitler's Germany to 1930s England was by no means easy for Pevsner, however, and this article investigates Pevsner's continuing debt at this time to German art history (*Kunstgeschichte*) in general, and to his doctoral supervisor, Wilhelm Pinder, in particular. The discussion, set within the broader context of émigré studies, addresses the contrasting practice of art history in the two countries at that time and the essential differences between conservatism, nationalism, and fascism.

* * * * *

- [1] At the very end of her magisterial biography, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life*, Susie Harries concludes that "he was not English, let alone 'more English than the English', and never wanted to be."¹ Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983: Fig. 1) was German and his working life was determined by his education in German *Kunstgeschichte*, the scholarly study of art that barely existed in Britain before the mid-twentieth century. Its introduction into British universities was, of course, one of the great achievements of the generation of émigré scholars that had been forced out of National Socialist Germany in the 1930s, led by Edgar Wind, Ernst Gombrich, and Pevsner himself. Yet his relationship to his new country was always ambivalent: "I am [...] never one hundred per cent sure", he once noted, "either how far I am not a foreigner and how far I am."²
- [2] Pevsner emigrated to Britain in October 1933, less than twenty years after the outbreak of World War I. The scars left by this fearsome encounter and the resulting reinforcement of national archetypes were still very present. Strong echoes survived into the 1930s of mutual belligerence of 1914, which saw H. G. Wells damning Germany as a nation

¹ Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), p. 801.

² *Ibid.*, p. 491. England was not inevitably Pevsner's first choice for his forced emigration. In May 1933, he was still considering Italy as an option, arguing that "[...] the art historians there themselves feel that they have too little experience of northern art. So I would have [in Italy] a wonderful task of cultural propaganda [...]" ([...] die dortigen Kunsthistoriker empfinden selbst, daß sie von der nordischen Kunst zu wenig erfahren. Hier hätte ich also eine schöne Aufgabe der Kulturpropaganda [...]). Pevsner, letter to Karl Brand, 30 May 1933, quoted Ulrike Wollenhaupt-Schmidt, "'Hitler hat die Bäume geschüttelt und Amerika hat die Früchte geerntet': Zur Geschichte des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars während des Nationalsozialismus", in Heinrich Becker (ed.), *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (München: Saur, 1998), p. 473. – Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German are by the author.

"obsessed by pride, by the cant of cynicism and the vanity of violence. [...] On the back of it, spurring it on, are the idea-mongers, the base-spirited writing men, pretentious little professors in frocks, scribbling colonels."³ In similar vein, the German poet, Richard Dehmel, countered a few weeks later: "Cold as fish are these island-folk: cunning, circumspect, conspiratorial, smart, and possessed of an insatiable appetite for booty. With hypocritical indifference they permit all warm-blooded virtues to decay. The sole motive of their policies is an uncompromising desire for profit."⁴ Heinrich Heine had famously insisted, back in the 1830s, that one shouldn't send a German poet to London;⁵ the prospects had not improved markedly by 1933 for a German art historian bound for Birmingham.



1 Nikolaus Pevsner, Göttingen 1929 (Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Sammlung Voit)

- [3] If there is a scholarly consensus on the state of exile, it is that there is no single and shared experience of exile. Instead, there are multiple individual biographies, each with wildly varying contours, formed by unique combinations of foresight and haplessness, good and bad planning, influential contacts and their absence, benign fortune and wretched bad luck. The results of this game of roulette, in which a human life is the ball that spins capriciously towards its final resting place, are predictably diverse. For the

³ H. G. Wells, "The War of the Mind", *The Nation*, 29 August, 1914.

⁴ Richard Dehmel, "An meine Kinder", *Berliner Tageblatt*, 9 October 1914 (Fischblütig ist dieses Inselvolk, klug, umsichtig, gewandt, verschwiegen und von unersättlicher Beutegier; alle warmblütigen Tugenden läßt es mit heuchlerischem Gleichmut verkümmern. Rücksichtslose Gewinnsucht ist die Triebfeder seiner ganzen Politik.).

⁵ "Aber schickt keine Poeten nach London!" Heinrich Heine, "Englische Fragmente" (1828), *Reisebilder* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1980), p. 507.

least fortunate, exile means the loss of all that was of value; for the most fortunate, it heralds the start of a new adventure that offers boundless rewards. Theodor Adorno characterized the former position with his pessimistic assertion, made in *Minima Moralia*, that the émigré intellectual "lives in an environment that must remain incomprehensible to him, however flawless his knowledge of trade-union organisations or the motor traffic may be; he is always astray. [...] The share of the social product that falls to aliens is insufficient, and forces them into a hopeless second struggle with the general competition amongst themselves. All this leaves no individual unmarked."⁶ In contrast, Vilém Flusser has insisted on a more positive reading of the exile condition:

"The exile is the other of the other. That means, he is different for the others, and the others are different for him. He himself is nothing but the other of the others, and only in this way can he 'identify' himself. And his arrival in exile allows the natives to discover that they can only 'identify' themselves in relationship to him. [...] For the exile threatens the 'particularity' of the native and questions it in his alienness. Yet even this polemical dialogue is creative, as it leads to the synthesis of new information. Exile, in whatever form, is the breeding ground for creative action, for the new."⁷

[4] As a German of Jewish descent, who had no great desire to be Jewish, who felt isolated by the anti-semitism he had experienced in his youth, and who had converted to Lutheranism in April 1921, immediately before commencing his university studies in Munich, Pevsner was in a particularly complicated and vulnerable position. Intentionally rootless at home, he was doubly rootless when he found himself in England in 1933, and his response to the historical and political forces that had driven him into exile is riven with complications and paradoxes. Most paradoxical of all, for a scholar who in September 1933 had lost his position at Göttingen University on racial grounds, was the continuing sympathy that he expressed in 1933 and 1934 for the politics of his oppressors, Adolf Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP).

[5] Stephen Games first broached this topic in his introduction to a collection of Pevsner's radio talks, published in 2002. Games recounts here a conversation that took place in Göttingen in May 1933, between Pevsner and a Birmingham schoolteacher in which

⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978), p. 33 [German: Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Berlin and Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1951), p. 45 (Jeder Intellektuelle in der Emigration [...] lebt in einer Umwelt, die ihm unverständlich bleiben muß, auch wenn er sich in den Gewerkschaftsorganisationen oder dem Autoverkehr noch so gut auskennt; immerzu ist er in der Irre. [...] Der Anteil des Sozialprodukts, der auf die Fremden entfällt, will nicht ausreichen und treibt sie zur hoffnungslosen zweiten Konkurrenz untereinander inmitten der allgemeinen. All das hinterläßt Male in jedem Einzelnen.)].

⁷ Vilém Flusser, *Von der Freiheit des Migranten: Einsprüche gegen Nationalismus* (Bensheim: Bollmann Verlag, 1994), p. 109 (Der Vertriebene ist der andere der anderen. Das heißt, er ist für die anderen anders, und die anderen sind anders für ihn. Er selbst ist nichts als der andere der anderen, und nur so kann er sich 'identifizieren'. Und seine Ankunft im Exil läßt die Ureinwohner entdecken, daß auch sie sich nur in Bezug auf ihn 'identifizieren' können. [...] Denn der Vertriebene bedroht die 'Eigenart' des Ureinwohners, er stellt sie durch seine Fremdheit in Frage. Aber selbst so ein polemischer Dialog ist schöpferisch, denn auch er führt zur Synthese neuer Informationen. Das Exil, wie immer es auch geartet sein möge, ist die Brutstätte für schöpferische Taten, für das Neue.).

Pevsner explained: "I love Germany, it is my country. I am a Nationalist, and in spite of the way I am treated, I wanted this movement to succeed. There is no alternative but chaos, and I cannot want my country to be plunged into civil war. There are things worse than Hitlerism."⁸ Games's revelation of Pevsner's political sympathies in the early 1930s provoked a furore in the press, as Pevsner was justifiably revered not only as the preeminent voice on English architecture but as a leading public intellectual and a national institution. Two key questions emerge: why was Pevsner sympathetic to the National Socialists at this time, and what was the nature of this sympathy?

- [6] Games's 2002 essay was the harbinger of his biography, *Pevsner — the Early Life: Germany and Art*, published in 2010, in which Pevsner's pro-National Socialist tendencies in the early 1930s were investigated in more detail.⁹ It was followed a year later by the Harries, biography, in which Pevsner's political leanings following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933 are clearly revealed in several extracts from his diaries and letters. The tone is set by the rather frightening observation, made on the boat to Dover in October 1933, that: "The second-class is almost entirely occupied by non-Aryans. Dreadful, dreadful — to think that's where I belong."¹⁰ Not only was Pevsner cut off from the culture and faith of protestant Germany, he was also defined in this new country by precisely the Jewishness that he had striven so hard to disown. His reaction was by no means exceptional. His fellow architectural historian, Julius Posener, an exceptionally generous and liberal spirit, recounted similar sentiments in his memoirs. Growing up as an assimilated Jew in the prosperous Berlin suburb of Lichterfelde, he had a brief encounter with the Zionist youth organization, *Blau-Weiß*, and recalled: "Zionism as such I found utterly unappealing. To live in the desert among camels and palm trees struck me as an invitation into exile. [...] Ultimately, and this was probably decisive, the other youths did not appeal to me. [...] This dislike was quite specifically determined, it was — to put it exactly — anti-Semitic. Now Jewish anti-Semitism is nothing special, in fact it's the rule. In my case it shaped my entire experience."¹¹ In 1935 Posener actually found himself in Palestine, working for Erich Mendelsohn, and recorded his response to the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem in one terse word: *Ekel* (loathing). This reaction has been characterized very succinctly by Posener's own son as follows: "It is the spontaneous

⁸ Francesca Wilson, "German University Town: After the Celebrations on May Day", *Birmingham Post* (May 1933), quoted Stephen Games, *Pevsner on Art and Architecture* (London: Methuen, 2002), p. xxiv.

⁹ See Stephen Games, *Pevsner — The Early Life: Germany and Art* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 185-206.

¹⁰ Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life*, above note 1, p. 133.

¹¹ Julius Posener, *In Deutschland 1945 bis 1946* (Berlin: Siedler, 2001), pp. 197-198, 201 (Den Zionismus als solchen fand ich ganz und gar nicht anziehend. In der Wüste zu leben, unter Palmen und Kamelen, das kam mir vor wie eine Einladung ins Exil. [...] Schließlich, und das war vermutlich das Entscheidende, gefielen mir die anderen Jungen nicht. [...] Dieses Missfallen war ganz spezifisch ausgeprägt, war, um es genau zu sagen, antisemitisch. Nun ist der jüdische Antisemitismus nichts Besonderes, er ist sogar die Regel. Bei mir prägte er meine ganze Erfahrung.).

reflex of the emancipated Jew, whose forebears escaped from the shtetl and ghetto, against the return of the ghetto and shtetl. It is modern man's existential fear of being dragged back into the Middle Ages in the name of 'culture'." ¹²

- [7] While he was clearly aware of the paradoxical situation in which he found himself on arrival in England, Pevsner hung on initially to the belief that the National Socialist reign would be short and that life in Germany would soon, somehow, return to normal, invigorated and cleansed by the right-wing interlude, but no longer anti-semitic. Most importantly, it would be culturally progressive and modernist. For inspite of its sentimental attachment to the pre-industrial past, the true emphasis of the Nazi revolution was not on the past but in escaping from the conventions and constraints of the past: breaking out into the future. For Pevsner, the NS revolution was not an endorsement of sentimental historicism, but the promise of youth, rejuvenation, and advanced technology. For this reason, he assured his wife September 1934: "As soon as the Aryan business fades out, I'm back home." ¹³ As Harries suggests, Pesner clung on to this optimistic position and thus to an essentially positive view of National Socialism right through until 1935, when the enactment of the Nuremberg Race Laws meant, in his own words, that "I am condemned to stay in England", a country he still found "somehow hateful." ¹⁴

- [8] There are two texts from these early years of exile and turmoil in which Pevsner most clearly adopts the language and tone of the National Socialist Party. The first, "Kunst und Staat" (Art and the state), appeared in *Der Türmer*, a conservative, nationalist and protestant journal, which was consistently hostile to the democratic politics of the Weimar Republic. The second, unpublished text survives in manuscript form in the Pevsner Papers at the Getty Research Institute Library, and is entitled "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft: Zehn Abschnitte von -----" (Art of the present and art of the future: ten sections by -----). ¹⁵ Although unsigned, the text is clearly in Pevsner's handwriting, and is accompanied in the Getty file by two rejection slips, from the Eugen Diederichs Verlag in Jena and from the journal *Kunst der Nation*. These were sent to Pevsner's pseudonym, Dr. Peter Bernt, at the address of an old school friend in Leipzig. ¹⁶ While the pseudonym freed Pevsner's polemical text from its association with an academic who had been dismissed on racial grounds, it also opened the way for

¹² Alan Posener, "Nachwort", *Ibid.*, p. 201 (Es ist der unwillkürliche Reflex des emanzipierten Juden, dessen Vorfahren dem Shtetl und dem Ghetto entflohen, gegen die Wiederkehr von Ghetto und Shtetl. Es ist die existenzielle Angst des modernen Menschen, im Namen der 'Kultur' vom Mittelalter eingenommen zu werden.).

¹³ Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life*, above note 1, p. 165.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft: Zehn Abschnitte von -----", Getty Research Institute Library, Special Collections, Pevsner Papers, 840209, box 15. I am indebted to Ursula and Jürgen Marsch for their help in transcribing this manuscript text.

¹⁶ See Stephen Games, *Pevsner — The Early Life: Germany and Art*, above note 9, p. 205.

Pevsner to reveal himself as the author, should the situation in Germany improve at some point in his favour. The frustration he felt at his exclusion from a career in Germany at precisely the revolutionary moment of change is palpable in his letters of the period. "How productive I could be", he wrote in October 1934, "if only I were in the right place."¹⁷

- [9] After paraphrasing some of the main arguments in these NS-tinged polemics, Harries concludes: "Pevsner's motives are certainly not clear to us now and may not have been entirely clear to him then."¹⁸ While there can be no certainty in suggesting reasons or motives, it is nevertheless possible to offer some thoughts on the cultural context from which Pevsner's ideological and methodological convictions sprang, namely the world of German academic art history — *Kunstgeschichte* — which had formed and educated Pevsner in the previous decade, and the particular conditions that prevailed in German art historical scholarship immediately after the Nazi accession to power. Furthermore, we might consider Pevsner's texts as examples of the "polemical dialogue", to use Flusser's term, between the exile and the native. This dialogue, particularly in the context of architecture, sees the reassertion of the conclusions that Pevsner had reached in the 1930s, and which he may have felt were threatened within his own working sphere not by the National Socialists, but by the indifference of his English hosts to the progressive art and architecture that had emerged on the continent in the early decades of the twentieth century, and to their potential as catalysts for cultural and political change.
- [10] A good insight into Pevsner's architectural thinking in the early thirties, prior to his departure for England, is given by a review of the first volume of Le Corbusier's Complete Works, which he published in 1931 in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*. Rejecting Le Corbusier's proposition, that modernist architecture was the invention of the French (and in his case, the French-speaking Swiss) — by Auguste Perret, Tony Garnier, and Frantz Jourdain — Pevsner constructed his alternative history, which gave much more credit to the German-speaking pioneers, to the likes of Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, Peter Behrens, Adolf Loos, and, above all to Walter Gropius. While acknowledging Le Corbusier as a great artist, Pevsner felt obliged to condemn both his "creative intoxication with techno-romanticism" and the simple impracticality of his domestic architectural, particularly the house at the Weißenhof estate in Stuttgart. "But who", asked Pevsner, "could possibly be the tenant here? Certainly not the vast number of those in most urgent need of housing, but only a small circle of aesthetically highly-sensitive art lovers."¹⁹ The real problem of mass housing was being addressed, argued Pevsner, not

¹⁷ Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life*, above note 1, p. 165.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118 (Harries mistranslates the title of this text as "Art of the Past and Art of the Future", *Ibid.*, p. 117).

¹⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner, review of "Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Ihr gesamtes Werk von 1910 bis 1929", *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 193, no. 8 (1931), p. 310 (Wer aber kommt damit als Mieter in Frage? Die riesige Zahl der am dringlichsten Wohnungsbedürftigen gewiß nicht, sondern

by the French or Swiss but by the Germans and the Dutch, epitomized by the large-scale housing estates [*Großsiedlungen*] designed by architects like Walter Gropius at Siemensstadt in Berlin, Ernst May in Frankfurt, and Otto Haesler in Celle. As Pevsner's review suggests, it was entirely possible in the early 1930s to support simultaneously both modernist architecture and National Socialism.

[11] While such terms as Nazi art or Nazi architecture seem in retrospect almost oxymoronic, and summon up images of Adolf Ziegler's insipid nudes or Albert Speer's overblown neoclassicism, the aesthetic preferences of National Socialism were by no means clear in the early phase of the new regime. In the visual arts, the conventional battle lines between the comfortable and traditional on one side and the avant-garde on the other were given additional significance by their advocacy by leading party ideologists, with Alfred Rosenberg defending the conservative position and Joseph Goebbels the more radical view. Rosenberg, an architect by training, was the founder and leading voice in the "Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur" (Militant League for German Culture), based in Munich, and was given the responsibility by Hitler in 1934 for nurturing the cultural soul of the party as "Beauftragter des Führers für die gesamte geistige und weltanschauliche Schulung der NSDAP" (The Führer's commissioner for the entire spiritual and philosophical education of the Nazi Party). His leadership in this role, however, was in conflict with that of Goebbels, appointed "Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda" (Minister for people's enlightenment and propaganda) in March 1933. In response to the anti-modernist "Chambers of Horror" exhibitions that the "Kampfbund" was already staging in January 1933 in museums in Karlsruhe, Halle, and Mannheim, a pro-modernist yet still pro-Nazi counter movement found its mouthpiece in the "NSD-Studentenbund" (National Socialist German Students' League), centred on Berlin. While the "Kampfbund" orchestrated vigorous attacks on modernism in general and German expressionist art in particular — the art of Ernst Barlach, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and, above all, Emil Nolde — the Students' League damned Rosenberg's troupe as "an organization of cantankerous daubers."²⁰

[12] Otto Andreas Schreiber, an unsalaried painting assistant at the Kunstschule Schöneberg (Schöneberg art school) and activist member of the SA, was the leading voice among the students. As early as February 1933 he and a troop of SA men had occupied the Kunstschule Schöneberg, insisted on the right of the SA to hold meetings there, and raised the swastika flag on the roof. At the key meeting of the pro-modernist faction of the Students' League, held in the main auditorium of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin (now the Humboldt University) on 29 June 1933, the programme of the "Kampfbund" was roundly denounced. "The attempt by uncreative people to shape art

nur ein kleiner Kreis ästhetisch sehr empfindlicher Kunstliebhaber.).

²⁰ See Hildegard Brenner, "Die Kunst im politischen Machtkampf der Jahre 1933/34", *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 10, no. 1 (January 1962), p. 22.

historical dogmas," said Schreiber, "sits like an incubus on all the young artists of our movement. [...] The National Socialist students are fighting against reactionary views in the arts because they believe in the vital developmental power of art, and because they reject the denial of a generation of German artists that preceded today's, and whose powers flow into the art of the future. [...] National Socialist youth believes in nothing more adamantly than the triumph of quality and of truth. The vital principle of art is freedom."²¹

- [13] Freedom, of course, is relative: the Student's League had organized the infamous book burning on the Opernplatz in Berlin only two months earlier on 10 May, at which the principle target was modernist literature. The finale of this event was reached at midnight, when the books had been reduced to ashes, and Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels gave his speech. The situation in the visual arts was less clear, however, and symptomatic of the disjunction between rhetoric and practice, the hopes of the student pressure group and of their sympathizers among the educated classes rested in the early months of the regime on Joseph Goebbels, who was known to be sympathetic to the modernist cause and had hung paintings by Nolde, confiscated from the Nationalgalerie, in his own apartment.²²
- [14] The intense rivalry between the Rosenberg and Goebbels factions was further heightened by the exhibition staged by the NSD-Studentenbund at the Galerie Möller in Berlin at the beginning of July 1933. It included works by Lehmbruck, Kanoldt, Kolbe, Barlach and also the National Socialist activists Schreiber and Weidemann, who was a protégé of Goebbels.²³ The struggle simmered on for another year, boiling up from time to time, as in March 1934 on the occasion of an exhibition of Italian Futurist painting — Aeropittura — held in the rooms of the former Galerie Flechtheim on Lützowufer, Berlin. The

²¹ Otto Andreas Schreiber, speech to the NSD-Studentenbund, Friedrich Wilhelm University Berlin, 29 June 1933, quoted *Ibid.*, p. 23 (Der Versuch der kunsthistorischen Dogmenbildung durch unschöpferische Menschen liegt wie ein Alpdruck auf allen jungen Künstlern unserer Bewegung. [...] Die nationalsozialistischen Studenten kämpfen gegen die Kunstreaktion, weil sie an die lebendige Entwicklungskraft der Kunst glauben und weil sie die Verleugnung der deutschen Kunstgeneration, die der heutigen vorausging und deren Kräfte in die Kunst der Zukunft einmünden, abwehren will. Die nationalsozialistische Jugend [...] glaubt an nichts so fest wie an den Sieg der Qualität und der Wahrheit. Das Lebelement der Kunst ist die Freiheit.).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 24. Nolde, in turn, was anti-semitic and outspoken in his criticism of Jewish art dealers in Germany. A recently discovered letter from Nolde to his friend and supporter, Hans Fehr, now in the Getty Research Institute, reveals that Nolde and his wife, Ada, went to Munich in November 1933 to take part in a memorial ceremony to the fallen heroes of the National Socialist Party at the invitation of Heinrich Himmler. See James van Dyke, "Something New on Nolde, National Socialism, and the SS", *Kunstchronik*, 65, no. 5 (May 2012), pp. 265-270. Nolde extolled Hitler in this letter: "The Führer is great and noble in his efforts, a brilliant man of action. Only a whole crowd of darker spirits still swarm around him in an artificially-created cultural fog. It looks as if the sun will break through here soon, dispersing this fog." Quoted *Ibid.*, p. 269 (Der Führer ist groß u. edel in seinen Bestrebungen u. ein genialer Tatenmensch. Nur ein ganzer Schwarm dunkler Gestalten noch umschwärmen ihn in einem künstlich erzeugten Kulturnebel. Es hat den Anschein, daß demnächst die Sonne hier durchbrechen wird, diese Nebel zerstreuend.).

²³ See Christian Saehrendt, *"Die Brücke" zwischen Staatskunst und Verfemung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), pp. 45-46.

resolution of this conflict finally came with Hitler's speech at the 1934 Reichsparteitag held from 5-10 September in Nuremberg, in which he damned the "corrupters of art [*Kunstverderber*] [...] the Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists, etc." who threatened the cultural evolution of National Socialism.²⁴ In the same speech, very significantly, he also condemned any attempt to impose a nostalgic, retrospective, and folksy version of art on the NS revolution. At a stroke, the hopes of the *völkisch*, reforming voices of the 1910s and 1920s were silenced, and the careers of those like the artist Fidus and even the architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, who one might have expected to flourish under the new regime, hit the buffers. Nationalist conservatism was not necessarily synonymous or even compatible with National Socialism.

- [15] One surprising, if short-term product of the Rosenberg/Goebbels battle was a new art journal, *Kunst der Nation* (Art of the nation) founded in late October 1933, which over the following two years published articles supporting modernist art in general and Expressionism in particular. Its co-editor was Otto Andreas Schreiber, who was supported by a distinguished group of authors that included the art historians Werner Haftmann, Herbert Griebitzsch, and Wilhelm Pinder; the architects Paul Bonatz, Werner March, and Hans Schwippert, and the photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch. The ambition of the journal was to align avant garde art and National Socialist politics, both understood as expressions of similar goals in different fields. Formatted as a six-page newspaper, *Kunst der Nation* appeared every two weeks and at the point of its politically enforced closure in 1935 had 3,500 subscribers. It was not simply an art journal. As characterized by its chronicler, Stefan Germer:

"More than the voice of a particular artistic direction, *Kunst der Nation* was the mouthpiece of that generation which had taken the public stage after the First World War. The framework for their art-critical involvement was determined less by theoretical considerations than by specific educational experiences, experiences, and obsessions. The reference point for their thinking was formed in philosophy by Nietzsche, in the arts by Expressionism, and in politics by National Socialism. All three tendencies were adopted with an almost fanatical enthusiasm, and in places the articles take on the character of confessions. In certain instances there would have been tactical considerations, but in general the endorsement of National Socialism is so euphoric, that it must be ascribed to genuine conviction and not simply to a cautious mimicry of the dominant opinion."²⁵

²⁴ See Hildegard Brenner, "Die Kunst im politischen Machtkampf der Jahre 1933/34", above note 20, pp. 38-39. For more recent scholarship on *Kunst der Nation*, see Stefan Germer, "Kunst der Nation", in Bazon Brock and Achim Preiß (eds.), *Kunst auf Befehl? Dreiunddreißig bis Fünfundvierzig* (München: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1990); Dieter Scholz, "Otto Andreas Schreiber, die *Kunst der Nation* und die Fabrikaustellung" in Eugen Blume und Dieter Scholz (eds.), *Überbrückt: Ästhetische Moderne und Nationalsozialismus. Kunsthistoriker und Künstler 1925-1937* (Köln: König, 1999); and Vittore Pizzone, "'Kunst der Nation', 1933-35: Deutscher Studentenbund e arte d'avanguardia", *L'uomo nero* (Milan), 3, no. 4/5 (2006), pp. 251-271.

²⁵ Stefan Germer, "Kunst der Nation", *Ibid.*, p. 28 (Mehr noch als Organ einer bestimmten künstlerischen Richtung, war *Kunst der Nation* Sprachrohr jener Generation, die nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg die öffentliche Bühne betreten hatte. Weniger theoretische Überlegungen als die spezifischen Bildungserlebnisse, Erfahrungen und Obsessionen dieser Generation bestimmten den Rahmen ihrer kunstkritischen Einlassungen. In philosophischer Hinsicht bildete Nietzsche, in künstlerischer der Expressionismus, in politischer der Nationalsozialismus den Bezugspunkt ihres

- [16] Common to both the artistic and political factions of this generation was an intense hatred of the late nineteenth-century liberalism of their parents, which was explicitly attacked in an article by H. G. Theunissen published in the very first issue of *Kunst der Nation* and tellingly entitled "Der Kulturwille der jungen Generation" (the cultural will of the young generation). According to this programme, the social constraints of bourgeois existence were to be superseded by a new engagement with nature and the old divisions of class replaced by the community of the people.
- [17] Superficially, *Kunst der Nation* was radical, progressive, and pro-modernist. In response, for example, to the Futurist exhibition mentioned above it proclaimed: "We greet the Futurist exhibition at the Lützowufer in Berlin [...] as an delightful confirmation of the multiplicity of artist endeavours and for the justification of this multiplicity."²⁶ Yet while the polemical impact of the Italian example was valued, the core argument of *Kunst der Nation* was that German Expressionism was a true statement of the Nordic spirit, and thus an entirely appropriate starting point for the new art of National Socialism. Pinder set the tone by arguing that: "In German art, the direct expression of the Viking can be proven to be a constantly recurring foundation, albeit one that is by no means always directly visible."²⁷ And for Pinder and his associates, Nordic meant strong, simple, straightforward, and without artifice: Nolde rather than French Impressionism. The future development of German art was to spring from this Nordic genealogy: in Schreiber's words: "through this organic continuity we may hope for a higher development of German painting."²⁸ This position, however, entirely contradicts the two principal drivers of mainstream twentieth-century modernism, namely universalist ambitions and an infatuation with technology. In spite of the token gestures made towards Italian Futurism, the eyes of *Kunst der Nation* were firmly turned both inwards and backwards. As noted by Stefan Germer: "The true interests of the authors, therefore, were concerned less with the presentation of new tendencies than with the historical substantiation of the avant garde within the tradition. This is particularly clear when the issue is the continuation of Expressionism. [...] What is demanded here is a sort of art-historically

Denkens. Aufgenommen wurden alle drei Tendenzen mit einem fast schwärmerischen Enthusiasmus, stellenweise haben die Beiträge den Charakter von Bekenntnissen. Natürlich wird es im einzelnen taktische Rücksichten gegeben haben, aufs Ganze gesehen aber ist die Zustimmung zum Nationalsozialismus so euphorisch, daß sie sich in den meisten Fällen wirklicher Überzeugung und nicht allein vorsichtiger Mimikry an die herrschende Meinung verdanken dürfte.).

²⁶ G. H. Theunissen, *Kunst der Nation*, 1 April 1934, quoted Stefan Germer, "Kunst der Nation", above note 24, p. 32 (Wir begrüßen die futuristische Ausstellung am Lützowufer in Berlin [...] als erfreuliches Zeugnis für die Vielseitigkeit künstlerischer Bestrebungen und für die Berechtigung dieser Vielseitigkeit.).

²⁷ Wilhelm Pinder, "Vom Wikingertum unserer Kultur", *Kunst der Nation*, 2, no. 13 (1 July 1934), p. 1, quoted Stefan Germer, "Kunst der Nation", above note 24, p. 36 (In der deutschen Kunst läßt sich der unmittelbare Ausdruck des Wikingischen als eine immer wiederkehrende, wenn auch keineswegs immer unmittelbar sichtbare Grundmöglichkeit nachweisen.).

²⁸ Otto Andreas Schreiber, *Kunst der Nation*, 1 April 1934, quoted Hildegard Brenner, "Die Kunst im politischen Machtkampf der Jahre 1933/34", above note 20, p. 32 (Durch diese organische Kontinuität ist eine Höherentwicklung der deutschen Malerei zu erhoffen.).

conditioned painting, which in its reflexivity, of course, would differentiate itself from its model."²⁹ This was an avant garde grounded, paradoxically, on the polemics of the historians.

- [18] As already noted, Pevsner submitted his article "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft: Zehn Abschnitte von -----" anonymously to *Kunst der Nation*, allying himself with those who sympathized with the political goals of National Socialism but understood the Nordic spirit in the visual arts not in the ethnic and "völkische" terms of Rosenberg's "Kampfbund" but as a radical and progressive impulse. Pevsner's contribution, however, was turned down. In their rejection note, which was dated 21 February 1934 and sent to his old school friend, Helmut Meyer, at an address in Leipzig, the editors explained their difficulty with the text: "Dear Sir, we have reviewed the piece you sent us with great interest, but are unable to reach the decision to publish it as a pamphlet. Your work is too long to be printed in the newspaper, with the result that we must regrettably forego the opportunity to pursue the matter more closely. Heil Hitler! Kunst der Nation, editorial office."³⁰ Pevsner's link with *Kunst der Nation* was most probably Pinder, who had been his doctoral supervisor at the University of Leipzig.
- [19] Pinder was the great public art historian between the wars in Germany. His progress to ever more significant chairs in art history eloquently charts his career progress. Following three years as professor in Strasbourg, transferred to Leipzig in 1921, turning down at that time the offer of Max Dvořák's chair in Vienna. In 1927 he moved on to the chair in Munich, and then in 1935 to the professorship in Berlin. In addition to supervising around 100 doctoral students, he was also chair of the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft and was instrumental in the founding of one of the great art historical journals of the period, *Kritische Berichte zu kunsthistorischer Literatur*. Alfred Stange, Professor of Art History at the University of Bonn, noted in 1937 that that he "unfailingly regarded [Pinder] as the greatest representative of our discipline, to whom we *German* art historians owe a constant debt of thanks."³¹ Pinder's ambitious doctoral student, Nikolaus Pevsner, was clearly awestruck by his eminent and celebrated mentor, and confessed in

²⁹ Stefan Germer, "Kunst der Nation", above note 24, p. 33 (Das eigentliche Interesse der Autoren gilt mithin weniger der Vorstellung neuer Tendenzen als einer geschichtlichen Fundierung der Avantgarde innerhalb der Tradition. Deutlich wird dies besonders dort, wo von der Fortsetzung des Expressionismus die Rede ist. [...] verlangt wird also eine Art kunsthistorisch reflektierter Malerei, die sich natürlich in ihrer Reflektiertheit von ihrem Vorbild unterscheidet würde.).

³⁰ Letter from editorial office of *Kunst der Nation* to anonymous recipient (Nikolaus Pevsner), 21 February 1934, Pevsner Papers, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute Library, 840209, box 15 (Sehr geehrter Herr! Wir haben mit grossem Interesse Ihre uns übersandte Arbeit geprüft, können uns jedoch nicht entschliessen, dieselbe als Broschüre herauszugeben. Für einen Abdruck in der Zeitung ist Ihre Arbeit zu lang, so dass wir leider verzichten müssen, der Angelegenheit näher zu treten.).

³¹ Alfred Stange letter to Wilhelm Pinder, 16 November 1937, quoted Heinrich Dilly, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker 1933-1945* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1988), p. 46 ([...] stets für den großen Repräsentanten unseres Faches halte, dem wir *deutschen* Kunsthistoriker stets zu Dank verbunden sind.).

1922 that "my admiration for Pinder may be excessive."³² Their close relationship continued throughout the next decade, with Pevsner sending Pinder copies of his writings, and Pinder, for example, praising the Le Corbusier review in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* as "brave and correct".³³

- [20] Excessive it may have been, but Pevsner's debt to Pinder was also lasting. In post-World War I Germany, as the reparations demanded by the victorious Allies reduced the German economy to rubble and generated astronomical levels of inflation, Pinder's insistence on the primacy of German art and the feebleness of recent French art must have been particularly appealing. A loaf of bread may have cost millions of Reichsmark, but spiritual and emotion sustenance was to be found in the continuum of German art that ran from Dürer, Altdorfer and Cranach to Nolde, to twentieth-century Expressionism, and to the radical experiments of the Bauhaus.
- [21] Pinder's position in 1933 can be judged from a lecture given on 3 August at the Pädagogische-psychologische Institut of the University of Munich. Its title was "Die bildende Kunst im neuen Staat" (Visual art in the new state), clearly prefiguring the title of Pevsner's article of the following year, "Kunst und Staat" (Art and the state). Pinder strongly supported the National Socialist revolution, seeing it as a process that "comes as unavoidable as the spring, something that no so-called spirit has brought forth, but rather that thing which itself is unreachable, incomprehensible and wonderful: generative life!"³⁴ And just as the National Socialist revolution appeared to Pinder to have sprung from the spontaneous will of the people, so the art of the people was equally bounded by particularist, national sentiment:

"Art and the people belong indissolubly together. I have not been able to believe for a moment that art is international, and have invariably seen it as an evasion and pretence offered by those who have a need for it: the rootless and the degenerate. [...] From folk art up to the highest peaks — and precisely in the very highest summits such as Bach and Beethoven — all art is an expression of cultural environment, nation and tribe. That Dürer is Franconian and Holbein Swabian, I don't only know this, I can see it and show it. I can also see and show that these tribal characteristics are not simply due to environmental influences (which also exist), but are essentially facts of nature. One day we shall be able to show methodically in the constantly recurring instances of transmitted forms whether in a particular case the work was created by a German trained in France (or vice versa), or in another instance by an Umbrian schooled in Florence. We can already sense this and will one day, hopefully, be able to determine methodically how the native-born differs in the realm of art from the non-native. We shall establish a scala of transferability and will see time after time that the national element is the untransferable, that the untransferable is the essential, and thus that the national is the essential. [...] Art and the nation, to repeat it once again, belong

³² Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life*, above note 1, p. 59.

³³ Stephen Games, *Pevsner — The Early Life: Germany and Art*, above note 9, p. 190.

³⁴ Wilhelm Pinder, "Die bildende Kunst im Neuen Staat", in Pinder, *Reden aus der Zeit* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1934), p. 27 ([...] daß dieser Vorgang so unabwendbar wie der Frühling kommt, ein Etwas, das kein sogenannter Geist erzeugt hat, sondern das allem Geiste Unerreichliche, Unbegreifliche und Wunderbare selbst: das zeugende Leben!).

together, art and internal politics, however — that is a mixing of things that are essentially foreign to each other. I can know and see who is my political opposition: liberalism and Bolshevism, these are my natural enemies of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, which I have to fight as a good soldier of today's state [...]."³⁵

- [22] Yet although Pinder sought to differentiate between "art" and "internal politics", he was clearly very persuaded in 1933 by the authority of Adolf Hitler. Later in the same presentation we find the hope for the future invested not in new formal languages for art, but in the new man:

"Formal experiments will not bring the new art, but the new man, who once again has spiritual depth, just as our great leader [Führer] has emerged wondrously from the deepest core as a consolidation of our entire people. When it is once again self-evident, that the complete man [Vollmensch] has the word, the man who is artist, soldier, thinker, politician and man of action all in one — the essential man, with a healthy will, a healthy spirit, a healthy soul, a healthy body, and, above all, a man with a belief — then there will be no need to agonize about style any longer. There will be a style once again and no problem of style."³⁶

- [23] Thanks to the Führer, insists Pinder, Germany was standing on the threshold of "a new Middle Ages", which "although previously not a mark of honour, is for us historians today the greatest title that one can bestow on a historical era."³⁷

- [24] This argument, which offered the Gothic cathedral as the ultimate model of an architecture that grew from the will, faith and labours of a harmonious society, with the architect acting as leader of all the arts, had been rehearsed twenty years earlier by

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34 (Kunst und Volk, das gehört unlöslich und unaufhebbar zusammen. Das Kunst international sei, das habe ich nicht eine Sekunde lang glauben können, das habe ich immer als Ausflucht und Vorwand derjenigen angesehen, die es nötig haben: der Wurzellosen und Entarteten. [...] Von der Volkskunst bis zu der höchsten Spitze — und gerade in den allerhöchsten Spitzen wie Bach und Beethoven — ist jede Kunst Ergebnis und Ausdruck von Kulturkreis, Nation und Stamm. [...] Daß Dürer Franke ist und Holbein Schwabe, das weiß ich nicht nur, das kann ich sehen und zeigen. Ich kann auch sehen und zeigen, daß diese Stammescharaktere nicht nur einfach Umwelteinwirkungen sind (die es auch gibt), sondern wesentlich Naturtatsachen. Wir werden eines Tages auch bei den immer wieder vorkommenden Überkreuzungsformen methodisch genau zeigen können, ob etwa hier ein französisch geschulter Deutscher (oder umgekehrt) geschaffen hat, dort ein florentinisch geschulter Umbrier usw. Wir können es jetzt schon empfinden und werden es hoffentlich eines Tages methodisch zeigen können, wie sich Angeborenes in der Kunst von Anerzogenen unterscheidet. Wir werden eine Skala der Übertragbarkeit aufstellen und wir werden immer wieder sehen können, daß das Nationale das Unübertragbare, daß das Unübertragbare das Wesentliche und also das Nationale das Wesentliche ist. Kunst und Nation also, noch einmal, gehören zusammen, Kunst und Innenpolitik aber — das ist eine Vermengung artfremder Wesenheiten. Wer politisch mein Gegner ist, das kann ich wissen und sehen; Liberalismus und Bolschewismus, das sind meine natürlichen Gegner von gestern, heute und morgen, die habe ich zu bekämpfen als guter Soldat unseres heutigen Staates [...]).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51 (Nicht formale Versuche werden die neue Kunst bringen, sondern der neue Mensch, der wieder aus der Tiefe lebt, so wie unser großer Führer aus der innersten Mitte, als Verdichtung unseres ganzen Volkes, wunderbar heraufgestiegen ist. Wenn wieder eine volle Selbstverständlichkeit geworden ist, daß der Vollmensch das Wort hat, der Mann, der Künstler, Soldat, Denker, Politiker, Täter in einem ist, der wesentlich ist, mit gesundem Willen, gesundem Geist, gesunder Seele und gesundem Körper, und vor allem mit einem Glauben — dann wird sich kein Mensch mehr seinen Kopf über Stile zu zerbrechen haben. Dann wird es wieder einen Stil geben und kein Stilproblem.).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50 ([...] ein neues Mittelalter. Das war früher kein Ehrentitel — für uns Kunsthistoriker erscheint es heute wieder als der größte, den man einer Zeit geben könnte.).

Bruno Taut and his circle of architectural Expressionists.³⁸ It also defined the formative years of the Weimar Bauhaus, which was modeled on the Medieval *Bauhütte*, and whose founding manifesto carried an image by Lyonel Feininger of a crystalline cathedral. As in the expressionist model, the new art would shun the niceties of French Impressionism and the constraints of the salon, and put art in the service of the great building project. In Pinder's very expressionistic words: "The new style of the future will, indeed, bring intensification and idealization on the basis of the modern style. [...] Sculpture will stand in the public service; that is to say in the service of the building. Painting will find its place in the whole as fresco and stained glass— and of course in the appropriate place as easel painting."³⁹ According to this mythic view of the Middle Ages, social consensus and high technology came together in the construction of the great cathedrals. This political and artistic unity, which had been lost over the ensuing centuries, was to be recovered through the power and the agency of National Socialism. This was not, of course, the medieval world of the ghetto and the alchemist but that of the virtuoso engineer of the day, the master mason.

- [25] The privileging of architecture over the other arts again echoed the expressionist vision. But whereas Taut and his associates saw modern building in steel and glass as a universal, supranational activity and as a means of challenging the nationalism that had led to World War I, Pinder saw architecture in 1933 as a means of giving tangible form to nationalist ideology. "I speak now of architecture as something that must overtly mean far more than painting, because as a form with an inescapably public impact it is much more able to give clear expression to the views of the state."⁴⁰ And the new, white architecture of *Neues Bauen* should be regarded, argued Pinder, as an appropriate expression of the new, National Socialist state. While admitting that the incorrectly-named "Bauhaus" style did not fulfill all the hopes of the period, not least because it could not articulate "the ceremonial and the sublime,"⁴¹ it was, nevertheless, a style that was explicitly German in its gestation, and in its emphasis on structural clarity and honesty was the natural successor, in some mystical way, of the German Gothic. Dismissing other national variations as compromised or dishonest, and rebuking in

³⁸ See Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), paperback edition 2010.

³⁹ Wilhelm Pinder, "Die bildende Kunst im Neuen Staat", above note 34, pp. 67-68 ("Der neue kommende Stil wird wohl die Steigerung und Verklärung aus dem Grunde des modernen Stils bringen. [...] Plastik wird im öffentlichen Dienste, also auch im Dienste des Bauwerks stehen. Malerei wird als Fresko und Glasmalerei — und selbstverständlich auch an geeigneten Stellen als Tafelbild — ihren Platz im Ganzen finden.).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46 (Ich rede jetzt von der Architektur, als von etwas, was öffentlich weit mehr bedeuten muß als Malerei, weil es als unausweichlich öffentlich wirksame Form weit deutlicher Staatsgesinnung auszudrücken vermag.).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52 (Dieser Stil — nennen wir ihn einmal kurz aber gewiß nicht ganz richtig, den "Bauhaus-Stil" — drückt freilich noch lange nicht alle unsere Hoffnungen aus. Denn es fehlt ihm gerade das eine, es fehlt ihm gerade das zuletzt entscheidende: Er kann das Festliche und Erhabene zugleich nicht geben!).

particular Le Corbusier's design for the League of Nations Building in Geneva for its false monumentalism,⁴² Pinder hailed modernist architecture as an essentially German triumph. Even though it had found echoes and resonances in France, the Soviet Union, and Italy, modernist architecture was German. Even the Italians, said Pinder, admitted this.

"For ten years, Italy had initially tried to build in a fascistic, half Roman Imperial, half Renaissance-ish style. The results were dismal. Now, since two years back, Italian Fascism is building in a completely modern manner. It is building in the new European style, which, for sure, is still at an early stage, and is still [...] incapable of sacred or monumental expression, but is nevertheless the expression of our own age. [...] This style was fostered especially in Germany and the Italian of today also speaks, quite candidly and almost for the first time in history of an adoption from Germany: he speaks approvingly and admiringly of a 'nuove stile tedesco', of a new German style!"⁴³

- [26] Pinder was by no means alone in arguing that modernism in architecture was essentially German and thus the style of architecture most appropriate to the Nazi revolution. The progressive architects themselves argued this in the early years of the new regime. Particularly fast off the mark was Wassili Luckhardt, a former advocate of utopian socialism, who published articles as early as March 1933, declaring himself in favour of a nationalist modernism grounded on Prussian classicism.⁴⁴ He was joined by such architectural luminaries as Walter Gropius, Hugo Häring, Hans Poelzig and even Theodor Fischer, in arguing in 1933/34 that *Neues Bauen* and modernist design had a natural affinity with the National Socialist world view.⁴⁵ This position also found political support in the early years of the new regime. Baldur von Schirach, for example, the leader of the Hitler Youth, was still insisting in 1936, that "to suggest that to build in steel glass and concrete contradicts the spirit of youth, which is to say the spirit of a true German

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 53: "The most dishonest was the project by the French/Swiss Le Corbusier [...] [which] in general seems fully and excessively modern; one has the impression that if a motor were built in, the building would immediately fly away; but winged in a portal in the baroque sense with a quadriga: monumentalism not as style, monumentalism as an addition." (Das unehrlichste war das Projekt des französischen Schweizers Le Corbusier: [...] Im ganzen scheinbar völlig übermäßig modern; man hatte den Eindruck, daß, wenn man einen Motor eingebaut hätte, der Bau sofort wegfliegen würde; aber daran angefliegen ein Portal im Barocksinn mit einer Quadriga: das Monumentale nicht als Stil, das Monumentale als Zutat.).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47 (Italien hat zunächst versucht, zehn Jahre lang, einen faschistischen, halb altrömischen, halb renaissancemäßigen Stil zu bauen. Der Erfolg ist kläglich gewesen. Jetzt, seit fast zwei Jahren, baut der italienische Faschismus völlig modern. Er baut den neuen europäischen Stil, der gewiss noch sehr unfertig ist, der noch [...] unfähig ist zu einem sakralen und monumentalen Ausdruck, aber immerhin Ausdruck unserer eigenen Zeit! Dieser Stil ist ganz besonders in Deutschland angebaut worden und der Italiener von heute spricht auch, ganz ehrlich, fast zum ersten Mal in seiner Geschichte von einer Übernahme aus Deutschland, er spricht anerkennend und bewundernd vom "nuove stile Tedesco", vom neuen deutschen Stil!).

⁴⁴ Wassili Luckhardt, "Vom Preußischen Stil zur Neuen Baukunst", *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 March 1933.

⁴⁵ See Stefan Germer, "Die italienische Hoffnung: Rolle und Rezeption der rationalistischen Architektur in Deutschland", in: Stefan Germer and Achim Preiss, *Giuseppe Terragni: Moderne und Faschismus in Italien* (München: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1991), p. 76. English version as "The Italian Hope: Rationalist Architecture's Role and Reception in Germany", trans. Jonathan Blower, *Art in Translation*, 1, no. 3 (November 2009), pp. 339-379.

romanticism, is to misjudge the basic rule of all true architecture. Precisely the concrete building, constructed from the most modern material of this age, can be an expression of a youthful and, in the most noble sense, romantic position."⁴⁶ Pevsner's writings from this period must be seen as a reflection of the same conviction.

[27] The similarities between Pevsner's published article, "Kunst und Staat" and Pinder's "Die bildende Kunst im Neuen Staat" extend well beyond the titles. Starting from assumption that the new, "authoritarian" political context in Germany creates a new relationship between art and the state, Pevsner claims an essential role for the art historian as one "who has at his command a knowledge of the historical relations and is thus, through his experience of past events and thought processes, able to mobilize his spirit for the ideas of the present."⁴⁷ As with the Expressionists and Pinder, the Middle Ages were seen as the prime historical model to which the present age should aspire. After asserting this in his second paragraph, Pevsner traces a long history of the decline of European art and architecture under the sway of such political forces as Baroque absolutism, the Dutch republic, and the liberal bourgeois society of the nineteenth century. The nadir was reached, he argues, in the late nineteenth century with French Impressionism. "Now art was no longer the highest ideal, with its task as the education of the human race, but existed simply for itself. Gautier, Verlaine, Wilde are the teachers of this gospel. With regard to painting, its sole sense was now to convey those sensations that the individual artist received from nature at a particular moment — extreme individualism, therefore, and extreme relativism."⁴⁸

[28] The argument that craftsmanship and handwork, rather than the self-conscious aestheticism fostered by the arts in the late nineteenth century, would bring cultural and social salvation was standard fare in Expressionism and gained an enormous boost around 1920, when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles suggested an agrarian rather than industrial future for Germany. Even the architect Peter Behrens, who had designed the celebrated AEG turbine hall in 1909 as a temple of high technology, designed a medievalising cathedral mason's lodge (*Dombauhütte*) in 1922 for the *Deutsche*

⁴⁶ Baldur von Schirach, *Betonzeitung*, 2, no. 6 (25 March 1936), in: Christian Fuhrmeister, *Beton, Klinker, Granit – Material, Macht, Politik. Eine Materialikonographie* (Berlin: Verlag Bauwesen, 2001), pp. 86-87 (Wenn man mitunter meint, es widerspräche dem Geist der Jugend, d. h. dem Geist einer wirklichen deutschen Romantik, in Stahl, Glas und Beton zu bauen, dann erkennt man das Grundgesetz jeder wirklichen Baukunst. Gerade der mit dem modernsten Material dieser Zeit geschaffene Betonbau kann Ausdruck einer jugendlichen und im edelsten Sinne romantischen Haltung sein.).

⁴⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst und Staat", *Der Türmer* (1934), p. 514. ([...] der über die Kenntnis der geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge verfügt und imstande gewesen ist, seinen Geist durch das Erleben der vergangenen Geschehnisse und Gedankengänge für die gegenwärtigen zu rüsten.).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 515 (Nun war die Kunst nicht mehr höchstes Ideal, weil sie die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts zur Aufgabe hatte, sondern einzig um ihrer selbst willen. Gautier, Verlaine, Wilde lehren dieses Evangelium. Was die Malerei betrifft, so wurde es nun ihr alleiniger Sinn, diejenigen Eindrücke wiederzugeben, welche der einzelne Künstler in einem bestimmten Augenblick vor der Natur empfing, — extremer Individualismus also und extremer Relativismus.).

Gewerbeschau (German exhibition of applied arts) in Munich and defended it as a necessary romantic response to the heartlessness of technology: "I know that people have accused our work of not being made in the spirit of our age of the car and the aeroplane; rather, we have taken a 'romantic direction' through the strong emphasis on craftsmanship. Okay, good. That is how it should be! There is nothing we need more than a little romanticism, to make life more attractive, to make contemporary life at all bearable."⁴⁹ Not only was there a call for a return to the craft skills of the Middle Ages, but also for its artistic judgement. As Pevsner notes, the "self-evident conviction of the Middle Ages" would judge an Impressionist work as follows: "A good painting, but only asparagus — therefore of no value."⁵⁰ A step in this direction, says Pevsner, was offered by Expressionism. Although highly aware of the shortcomings of Expressionism, which caused it to be shunned by all but a small group of sympathetic spirits, it had, nevertheless, pointed the way back to the healthy premises of the Middle Ages and, simultaneously, indicated a way forward out of the Impressionist impasse.

"Just as the firm contour and the pure, strong colour signifies a rejection of the over-refined dissolution of all forms and colours in Impressionism, so it must also be seen as the rejection of an individualism that is finally redundant, if once again a unified architecture is to be created out of the needs of the residents, and if the applied arts are to be recognized once again as having full value [...]."⁵¹

- [29] As a "symptom of renewal", Expressionism was joined in Pevsner's wish-list for the future by "militant art" and "politically charged art" [*Tendenzkunst*], which he admitted might well have to accommodate kitsch as a precursor of reform. "The new state," he insisted, "must not only demand an explicit and active commitment to Germany from the militant artist, but also from the artist whose work cannot express this commitment. For this artist too, it must be the case that even the highest artistic talent cannot be enough to excuse attitudes that are alien or hostile to the state."⁵² The article nevertheless

⁴⁹ Peter Behrens, "Die Dombauhütte: Aus der Eröffnungsrede von Peter Behrens," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 26 (1923), pp. 226-27, English translation from Ross Anderson, "The Medieval Masons' Lodge as Paradigm: Peter Behrens's 'Dombauhütte' in Munich, 1922", *The Art Bulletin*, 90, no. 3 (September 2008), here p. 444.

⁵⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst und Staat", above note 47, p. 515 ([...] gemäß der selbstverständlichen Ueberzeugung des Mittelalters zu sagen: Ein gutes Bild, aber nur Spargel, — also wertlos.) Pevsner echoes here a passage from an essay on art by Walther Rathenau, in which Rathenau bemoans the overvaluation of Impressionist paintings. "Among others, one of the war cries of the aesthetic salon prophets runs: 'Manet's bundle of asparagus is greater art than everything else, past and present.' The future chronicler of our cultural condition will smile over this slogan." Walther Rathenau, "Von neuerer Malerei" (1905), in: Rathenau, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Fischer, 1925), vol. 4, p. 276 (Unter anderem lautet eine Art Kriegsgeschrei ästhetischer Salonpropheten: 'Das Spargelbündel von Manet ist höhere Kunst als alles Vergangene und Gegenwärtige.' Der künftige Chronist unseres Kulturzustandes wird über diese Parole lächeln.).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 516 (Wie die feste Form und die reine starke Farbe eine Absage an die überzivilisierte Auflösung aller Form und Farbe im Impressionismus bedeuten, so muß es als Absage gegen einen endgültig vergangenen Individualismus angesehen werden, wenn nun wieder ein einheitlicher, aus den Bedürfnissen der Bewohnerschaft gebildeter Baustil geschaffen und wenn wieder die angewandte Kunst als vollwertig anerkannt wurde ...).

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 517 (Das ausdrückliche und gelebte Bekenntnis zu Deutschland muß der neue Staat aber nicht mehr nur vom kämpferischen Künstler verlangen, sondern auch von demjenigen, dessen

concludes with the assurance that since the state needs the support of the artist, it is the state's duty to show itself to be broadminded and understanding in gaining this support. Neither are qualities that one would immediately associate with National Socialism, but they were clearly still possibilities to Pevsner at the time of writing.

- [30] His benign plea in favour of an art and architecture that would both support and gain the support of the new regime was further developed in the unpublished text, "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft: Zehn Abschnitte von -----", probably penned in late 1933 or early 1934.⁵³ This is a badly structured and often repetitive essay, and it is not difficult to see why the editors at Eugen Diederichs and *Kunst der Nation* turned it down. It develops further the "polemical dialogue" of "Kunst und Staat", and reflects the intense frustration of Pevsner at his exile from Germany just at the point when the cultural politics of the new NS state were still apparently open to negotiation. The tone of the text throughout is strongly nationalistic and in spite of Pevsner's personal difficulties displays a remarkable enthusiasm for the new regime. Predictably, the aesthetic and ideological positions of the recent wartime enemies, France and Britain, as the dominant cultural powers of the nineteenth century, are consistently held up as examples of what Germany should avoid, namely "sublimated materialism [and] extreme individualism".⁵⁴
- [31] France is damned in particular as the spiritual home of impressionism and of the cult of the bohemian artist-genius, misunderstood and defamed by his contemporaries. The result, said Pevsner, was disastrous:

"In this way the artists freed themselves from their obligations to class and state, with the result that society was no longer able to take them seriously. Was this, perhaps, an activity worth making serious efforts for, to paint one and the same haystack a dozen times over in various lights, with the help of all the tricks of a highly-trained hand (and a skilful eye!). Who cares? Who could possibly enjoy this other than jugglers and acrobats, who by nature have a particular humour? Who could be affected by this at the very core of their existence? But that was definitely not the intention. For art was regarded as nothing more than a light-hearted game for the eye, as the finest of luxuries. These sorts of paintings truly belong where one finds them: between precious furniture, decorative knick-knacks, old wine, and artfully prepared food."⁵⁵

Werke es nicht aussprechen können. Auch für ihn muß es künftig gelten, daß selbst die höchste künstlerische Begabung nicht ausreichen darf, staatsfremde oder staatsfeindliche Gesinnung zu entschuldigen.).

⁵³ The rejection note from the journal *Kunst der Nation* is dated 21 February 1934. Getty Research Institute Library, Special Collections, Pevsner Papers, 840209, box 15.

⁵⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst der Gegenwart", above note 15, section 2 (Sublimierter Materialismus, extremer Individualismus [...]).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, section 2 (So haben sich die Künstler aus der Bindung an Stand und Staat gelöst, und so hat die Gesellschaft die dann auch nicht wieder ernst zu nehmen vermocht. War es vielleicht eine ernster Mühen würdige Beschäftigung, mit Hilfe aller Tricks höchst ausgebildeter Handfertigkeit [und Augenfertigkeit!] einen und denselben Heuhaufen ein Dutzend Male bei verschiedenen Beleuchtungen zu malen? Wen geht das an? Wer könnte an diesen Effekten einem dem Wesen nach anderem Spass haben als an Jongleuren und Akrobaten? Bei wem hätte das ins Zentrum des Lebens treffen können? Aber das sollte es ja wohl auch gar nicht. Kunst war ja als heiteres Spiel für das Auge, als feinstes Genussmittel gedacht. Diese Art Bilder gehören tatsächlich dahin, wo man sie findet: zwischen kostbare Möbel, zierliche 'Nippes', alte Weine and raffiniert zubereitete

[32] So much for France: in Pevsner's view the epicenter of self-referential art for art's sake, and of an over-refined and enfeebled aestheticism that divorced art from life. England, in contrast, was seen by Pevsner in very conventional terms as the epicenter of political liberalism, Manchesterism (which he refers to by name), and rampant individualism. In contrast to the English practice, Pevsner urged the new Germany to promote community rather than individuality: "Whoever feels happy as part of a large community (*Gemeinschaft*) in which he is prepared to flourish, must vigorously reject the dogma of English liberalism and individualism, according to which everyone's house is his 'castle'."⁵⁶ Pevsner argued that the individualist dictates of the nineteenth century had already been challenged in Germany in the early years of the twentieth century by Expressionism in painting and by the new architecture that was emerging from the designs of pioneering spirits like Peter Behrens and Walter Gropius.

[33] Expressionism, for Pevsner, marked a radical break with what had gone before. "No greater contrast", he wrote,

"could be imagined to the young Expressionist painter [...] than the Impressionist of 1900, with his hyper-refined sensibilities and his delight in nature as a tasty delicacy of colours and variations of light. In his paintings, prepared with a delicate hand for sensitive connoisseurs, there was no hard form, no loud colour by which one might be shocked. Everything unwound with apparent slickness as in a game. Everything that was thrilling, serious, alarming in the lives of all remained outside this shimmering world of appearances. The Expressionists were of a more robust mould. They were prepared to live with both feet firmly on the ground at exactly the point where everyone was most vigorously beleaguered. Determined and hard forms, therefore, garish colours and coarsening on all sides. No nerves — elementary emotion and provocative effects. This was in no way considered and constructed; it was the natural expression of the revolutionary mood of those years."⁵⁷

[34] But Expressionism in painting was merely a transitional moment, a style of transition, in Pevsner's words, "from the world of liberalism to the new world of the twentieth century."⁵⁸ To set this historical moment in the context of other great transitional moments in art, such as the catacomb paintings in Rome, the sculptural schemes at Speisen.).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21, section 8 (Wer sich froh als Teil einer grossen Gemeinschaft fühlt, in der er bereit ist aufzugehen, der muss den Glaubenssatz des englischen Liberalismus und Individualismus von dem Haus jedes einzelnen, das sein "Castle" sei, herzlich ablehnen.).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17, section 7 (Kein größerer Gegensatz zu dem jungen Maler des Expressionismus, wie man ihn als Typus kennt, ist zu denken als der Impressionist von 1900 mit seinen aufs äußerste verfeinerten Sinnen und seinem Entzücken an der Natur als einem Leckerbissen der Farbtöne und Beleuchtungsnuancen. In seinen Bildern, mit zarter Hand für sensitive Liebhaber bereitet, gab es keine harte Form, keine grelle Farbe, an der man sich stossen konnte. Alles wickelte sich scheinbar glatt wie ein Spiel ab. Was packend ernst, bedenklich im Leben Aller war, blieb außerhalb dieser schimmernden Scheinwelt. Die Expressionisten waren von robusterem Schlage. Sie waren bereit, sich mit beiden Füßen ins Leben zu stellen, wo es am heftigsten einen Jeden bedrängte. Bestimmte und harte Formen also, schreiende Farben, Vergrößerung allenthalben. Nur keine Nerven, — elementare Gefühle und aufreizende Wirkungen. Das war beileibe nicht reflektiert und gemacht, — es war der natürliche Ausdruck der Umsturzstimmung jener Jahre.).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17, section 7 ([...] ein Stil des "Überganges", — des Überganges eben aus der Welt der Liberalismus in die neue Welt des 20. Jahrhunderts.).

Naumburg Cathedral, Carolingian painting, and German architecture around 1250, he points to the researches of no lesser art historians than Max Dvořák and Wilhelm Pinder, his doctoral supervisor.⁵⁹

- [35] In delineating the vibrant iconographical tradition of the early medieval period, these studies also pointed to the absence of such a tradition in the twentieth century. The changed political realities of Germany, however, gave Pevsner hope that a new iconographic tradition might be established, based on a broad consensus of the German people. As Pevsner explained:

"The great masters of the Middle Ages bowed to the iconographic tradition, and painted or carved the figure of Christ or the unfolding of the legend of a saint in just the same way as their fathers and ancestors had done before them. This tradition, however, is a tragic misunderstanding in the case of a personality like Nolde. For we have no living iconographical tradition. Like all other natural ties, the age of liberalism willfully destroyed it. [...] If, therefore, the public is expecting a universally-binding form for religious themes, that is justified, but not in declaring old and obsolete forms to be universally binding. The twentieth-century notion of the state is a new category based on the ideas of the people [*Volksgedanke*], as, ultimately, will also be its iconography."⁶⁰

- [36] Dismissing the artifice of "Picasso, Braque, and their kind", Pevsner concludes that it is better to be "a 'class-conscious' philistine than the grateful victim of artistic manoeuvres such as these."⁶¹

- [37] As in painting, so in architecture, where liberalism — used here as a term of abuse — and its accompanying cult of individuality had destroyed social and aesthetic consensus. The collapse of the architectural culture of Germany in the later nineteenth century was typified for Pevsner by the mass housing of the great cities, summed up by the term "Mietskaserne" — rental barracks. But as he notes:

"People speak of barracks, but with that they give too much credit to the average big city apartment house of around 1900, and insult the state that builds barracks for its soldiers. If only the liberal state had shown the same concern for the living quarters of its workers as it did for its soldiers. Instead, with criminal consistency, it left the provision of housing almost without any restrictions to the landlords and the developers. One can hardly overestimate how much the state itself thereby

⁵⁹ On Pinder's legacy, see Marlite Halbertsma, "Nikolaus Pevsner and the End of a Tradition. The Legacy of Wilhelm Pinder", *Apollo*, 137, no. 372 (February 1993), pp. 107-109.

⁶⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst der Gegenwart", above note 15, section 6 (Die grössten Meister des Mittelalters haben sich der ikonographischen Tradition gebeugt und das Aussehen Christi oder den Verlauf von Heiligenlegenden so gemalt und gemeisselt, wie es schon Väter und Ahnen getan hatten. Und doch ist gerade einer Persönlichkeit wie Nolde gegenüber das ein tragischer Fehlschluss. Denn wir haben keine lebendige ikonographische Tradition. Das Zeitalter des Liberalismus hat sie wie alle anderen natürlichen Bindungen mutwillig zerstört. Das liesse sich in kunstgeschichtlichen Einzeluntersuchungen für alle Arten von Bildgegenständen mühelos nachweisen. Wenn also eine allgemein verbindliche Form für heilige Themen vom Publikum erwartet wird, so hat es wohl damit recht, nicht aber darin, eine alte und verbrauchte Form von sich aus für allgemein verbindlich zu erklären. Der Staatsgedanke des 20. Jahrhunderts ist ein neuer, der Volksgedanke ist es, — und so wird es schliesslich auch die Ikonographie sein.).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, section 6 (Besser ein "klassenbewusster" Banause, als das dankbare Opfer derartiger artistischer Operationen.).

contributed to stoking the passions of the class war. It is here, if anywhere, that one is fully justified in speaking of exploitation. For thousands and tens of thousands were built in all the main cities with the single goal of extracting the highest possible rental income from the available building volume. Many storeys, therefore, small apartments, and above all as little unbuilt space as possible. The result: no gardens, no public green space, but everywhere back courtyard blocks and tiny light wells."⁶²

[38] Pevsner singles out the Bayerische Viertel (Bavarian quarter) in Berlin as the ultimate example of the resulting stylistic cacophony (*Katzenmusik*), in which each house strove to differentiate itself from its neighbours in its façade architecture of plaster ornament and historical citation. This, of course, was seen by Pevsner as the inevitable result of a liberalism in which the individual is valued as more important than the nation and the state, and every architect regarded his single design as more worthy of attention than the greater, communal ensemble.

[39] As a result, the architect, like the contemporary painter, was condemned to reproduce the world as he personally viewed it. New forms were precluded, and these, argues Pevsner, are not to be found in the realm of the individual designer, but in the consciousness of the nation and of the historical period. The new, radical architecture of the future, therefore, would be the product of basic convictions shared by the entire nation:

"There must and there will once again be a *style*; a style of life and thus a style of art, such as all epochs possessed until the collapse of Baroque absolutism in the bourgeois revolution of 1789. That means: a shared language of art will dominate, based on shared convictions. This does not mean bleak uniformity and certainly not soullessness, but simply the healthy and natural consensus about certain self-evident ultimate goals and ultimate ideals. Which ideals these will be — to speak of that is to the highest degree a matter of belief. I would not have been able to have penned these pages were I not convinced that these could only represent a nationalist and socialist world view — those two component parts of the name National Socialism taken apart in order to let both parts consciously resonate with the same weight. The ideal of the state, the nation, and the community of the people [*Volksgemeinschaft*] as a spiritual unity will illuminate the path of life and art, and in the process a twentieth-century 'universalism' will be won, strong and healthy as that of the high Middle Ages."⁶³

⁶² *Ibid.*, section 2 (Man spricht von Kasernen, — aber damit tut man den durchschnittlichen Mietshäusern der Großstädte um 1900 allzu viel Ehre an und beleidigt den Staat, der für seine Soldaten Kasernen baute. Hätte der liberale Staat nur für die Wohnstätten seiner Arbeiter die gleiche Fürsorge gezeigt wie für seine Truppen. Statt dessen hat er, verbrecherisch konsequent, den Wohnungsbau den Hausbesitzern und den Bauunternehmern fast ohne alle Beschränkungen überlassen. Wie viel er damit selbst dazu beigetragen hat, die Leidenschaften des Klassenkampfes hochzutreiben, kann man kaum überschätzen. Wenn irgendwo, so darf hier mit vollem Recht von Ausbeutung gesprochen werden. Da werden Tausende und Zehntausende von Häusern in allen Großstädten gebaut, mit dem alleinigen Programm, aus dem vorhandenen Bauraum möglichst hohe Mietseinnahmen herauszuschlagen. Also viele Stockwerke, kleine Wohnungen und vor allem so wenig unbebauten Raum wie möglich. Das heißt: Keine Gärten, keine öffentlichen Grünflächen, sondern Hinterhäuser und winzige Lichthöfe überall.)

⁶³ *Ibid.*, section 3 (Es muss und es wird wieder einen *Stil* geben, einen Lebens- und damit auch einen Kunststil, wie ihn alle Epochen bis zum Zusammenbruch des barocken Absolutismus in der bürgerlichen Revolution von 1789 besessen haben. Das bedeutet: Es wird wieder eine gemeinsame Kunstsprache herrschen, gegründet in einer gemeinsamen Gesinnung. Damit ist keine öde

- [40] But in spite of the avowed aim to avoid "bleak uniformity" and "soullessness", Pevsner's vision of the architecture of the future is not without a certain fearsome rigour:

"A strong rhythm will dominate, without weak forms and weak references to the past, even the most beautiful past. This architecture will serve a simple, perhaps an austere life. The values it creates will reveal themselves as strict, closed, and proud, like countless columns marching in step. The buildings of work for the broad community will also be serene and pure, and equally serene, and genuinely monumental, the buildings of national resurgence and national celebration."⁶⁴

- [41] The military metaphor recurs later in Pevsner's text, when he assures the reader that "where the booming step of our era fits, there is today's life and today's soul."⁶⁵

- [42] Not all modernist tendencies were admitted to Pevsner's rather martial vision of the future, however, and Le Corbusier, predictably, was damned as too French, too self-indulgent, and too arts-for-arts-sake. "No other contemporary architect", notes Pevsner, following Pinder's lead,

"has been so sharply attacked, also by us in Germany, as the Genevan and Parisian-by-choice, Le Corbusier. And with no other have these attacks been so justified. Let the art historians, even the most serious, ascribe to him as much 'spatial fantasy' as they want. His villas still remain artistic playthings for the delight of idle and sophisticated snobs — hypertrophied Impressionism, so to speak. And Corbusier is in this respect by no means the only one. The great majority of the 'steel furniture' that is put on the market, or the verandas formed like a ship's bridge, the external stairs like the blades of a turbine or a rotary press, and the corners of the house shaped like a ship's bow, all this is machine-romanticism and in no way healthy art for the whole nation. To make entire external walls of houses and offices from glass, in order to freeze inside in winter and in summer to suffer from glasshouse panic, is the worst sort of l'art pour l'art — a sin."⁶⁶

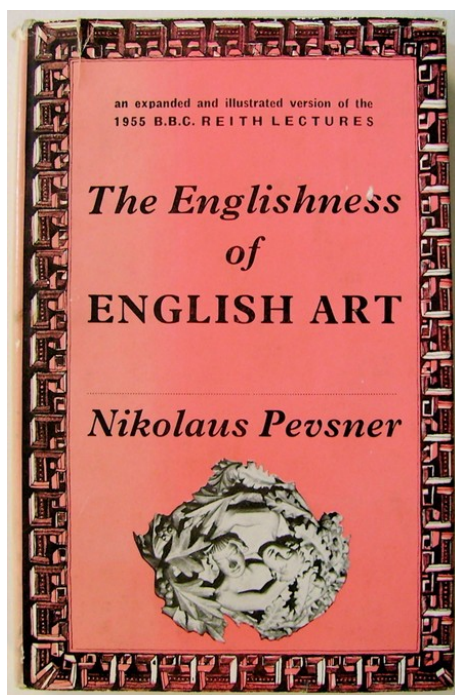
Gleichförmigkeit gemeint und beileibe keine Seelenlosigkeit, sondern allein die gesunde und natürliche Einigkeit über gewisse selbstverständliche letzte Ziele und letzte Ideale. Welche Ideale das sein werden, — davon zu sprechen ist in höchstem Masse Glaubenssache. Ich würde diese Seiten heute nicht hätte niederschreiben können, wenn ich nicht die Überzeugung trüge, es könnten einzig die einer nationalistischen und sozialistischen Weltanschauung sein, — diese beiden Bestandteile des Namens Nationalsozialismus einmal voneinander gelöst, um sie beide gleich gewichtig und bewusst klingen zu lassen. Das Ideal des Staates, der Nation und Volksgemeinschaft als geistiger Einheit wird dem Leben und der Kunst voranleuchten und damit wird ein "Universalismus" des 20. Jhdts. sein, stark und gesund wie der des hohen Mittelalters.).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, section 3 (Ein strenger Rhythmus wird herrschen, ohne weiche Formen und ohne weiche Anlehnung an Vergangenes, und wäre es das Schönste. Einem einfachen, vielleicht einem kargen Leben wird die Baukunst dienen. Die Werte, die sie schafft, werden straff geschlossen und hochgemut auftreten wie unzählige in gleichem Takt marschierende Kolonnen. Heiter und rein werden auch die Bauten der Arbeit für das Volksganze sein, heiter und von echter Monumentalität die Bauten nationaler Erhebung und nationaler Feste.).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, section 8 (Wo der dröhnende Schritt unserer Zeit hinpasst, da ist heutiges Leben und heutige Seele.).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, section 8 (Vielleicht keiner der heutigen Architekten ist, auch bei uns, so scharf angegriffen worden wie der Genfer und Wahlpariser Le Corbusier. Bei Keinem haben auch die Angriffe so recht gehabt. Mögen ihm die Kunsthistoriker, auch die ernstlichsten, so viel "Raumphantasie" zusprechen wie sie wollen. Seine Villen bleiben doch artistische Spielereien zum Vergnügen müssiger und raffinierter Snobs — hypertrophierter Impressionismus sozusagen. Corbusier steht in dieser Beziehung durchaus nicht allein. Maschinen-Romantik und keineswegs gesunde Kunst für ein ganzes Volk ist das Allermeiste von den "Stahlmöbeln", die auf den Markt gebracht worden sind, oder die Veranden wie Kommandobrücken, die Aussentreppen wie Leisten an Turbinen und Rotationspressen, die Hausecken wie Schiffsbugs. Ganze Aussenwände von Wohn- und

- [43] As before, the British also suffer in Pevsner's critique, and the slums of London and Liverpool are singled out as particularly vile examples of domestic squalor. This, for Pevsner, was the true challenge of the century.



2 Cover of Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (New York: Praeger, 1956) (photo: Bibliomania Books, Oakland, CA)

- [44] From his mid-1930s position of indifference and even hostility to the British, Pevsner achieved a remarkable shift both in his own views and in his public persona over the following decade. The intercession of World War II, of course, and the atrocities committed in the name of National Socialism made this transformation an imperative. As Christopher Long notes in a review of the Games biography: "Pevsner was careful, however, not to talk about politics in public, and in the years after World War II he made the successful transition from an immigrant with a suspect past to a beloved national figure. He accomplished this feat of self-transformation in part through his radio talks for the BBC beginning in early 1945."⁶⁷ Among the best known of these talks are the series of Reith Lectures, broadcast in October and November 1955, which were published in book form a year later as *The Englishness of English Art* (Fig. 2). The first was given on the BBC Third Programme on Sunday 16 October 1955, and was entitled "The Geography of Art". A close reading of this text is very revealing both about Pevsner's enormously generous identification with Englishness on one hand, and about the lingering echoes of his mentors on the other, in particular the Viennese art historian Dagobert Frey.

Bürohäusern aus Glas zu machen, um im Winter darin zu frieren und im Sommer die Treibhauspanik zu bekommen, ist schlimmste l'Art pour l'Art — Sünde.).

⁶⁷ Christopher Long, review of Stephen Games, *Pevsner — The Early Life: Germany and Art*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, 21, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, online edition.

[45] As already noted, national characteristics were paramount in Wilhelm Pinder's understanding of art history: "art and the people belong indissolubly together". In the years of political strife and uncertainty that marked the Weimar republic, the relationship between art and national character was a major topic in German-speaking art history. A leading voice was Josef Strzygowski, successively professor at Graz and Vienna universities, who promoted an ethnographic art history that used racial categories to justify evolutionary rules. In the 1920s, Strzygowski proposed a universal history that divided the world into north and south. The south was Latin and Semitic, and produced Roman art, the Italian Baroque, and French Classicism. The favoured north, in contrast, to quote a recent commentator, "was Turanian and Aryan; it had triggered Indo-European Iran, whence its traces could be followed to archaic Greece as well as to China and to western Europe of the Gothic period, then in the romantic landscape tradition, and finally in twentieth-century German Expressionism."⁶⁸ Ethnographically-orientated art history of this sort challenged the doctrines of stylistic analysis that had dominated German and Austrian art history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the linguistic model of art history with its grammar of forms. This move towards a geography of art found support in Wilhelm Wundt's anthropological researches in *Völkerpsychologie* (Ethnopsychology, 1908), Joseph Nadler's, *Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften* (Literary history of the German tribes and landscapes, 1912-28), and, most importantly, Heinrich Wölfflin's discourse on national physiognomies in his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Principles of art history), first published in 1915. "The time has come," urged Wölfflin, "to classify the historical exposition of European architecture, not simply as Gothic, Renaissance, etc., but to work out the national physiognomies, which cannot be entirely obliterated through imported styles."⁶⁹ Rather than focus exclusively on questions of style, therefore, the new art history would also look at climatic, landscape, physical factors, issues of ethnicity and race.⁷⁰

[46] This swing towards "*Kunstgeographie*" was stimulated in Germany by the revisionist mood after the Versailles Treaty, which promoted a strong resistance to France and to any idea of French influence on German art: precisely Pevsner's position as noted above. Furthermore, and as a compensatory mechanism for the inferiority complex vis-à-vis France, the influence of German art in Eastern Europe was over-estimated. At a time when the political map of Europe had been redrawn and great empires recently imploded, "*Kunstgeographie*" offered the opportunity to stake out territorial claims based on culture, which did not coincide with the new, post-1918 frontiers. In the German context,

⁶⁸ Rémy Labrusse, "Anthropological Delirium: Josef Strzygowski Confronts Alois Riegl", trans. John Goodman, *Art in Translation*, 6.1 (February 2015), currently in press.

⁶⁹ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 7th edition (München: Bruckmann, 1929), p. 254 (Es wird an der Zeit sein, daß die geschichtliche Darstellung die Baukunst Europas nicht mehr bloß einteilt nach Gotik, Renaissance usw., sondern die nationalen Physiognomien herausarbeitet, die auch durch importierte Stile nicht ganz verwischt werden können.).

⁷⁰ See Kurt Gerstenberg, *Ideen zur Kunstgeographie Europas* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1922).

the lost and disputed territories were at the western and eastern extremes of the country, precisely the areas where the speculative scholarship was focused. At the University of Bonn, for example, an Institute for Historical Regional Studies of the Rheinland (Institut für geschichtliche Landeskunde der Rheinlande) was established in 1920. Its Director, Hermann Aubin, worked with the art historian Paul Clemen and the linguist Theodor Frings to prove that Alsace and Lorraine were part of the "*deutsche Kulturraum*". In 1925, Aubin turned his thoughts toward the eastern edges of the German state, moved to Breslau and continued his work there in arguing the German cultural claims to eastern Europe.⁷¹ He was joined in Breslau in 1931 by the Austrian art historian Dagobert Frey, whose subsequent work was vigorously focused on questions of national identity in art.⁷² Indeed, for Frey, "Stamm" — race or ethnicity — was "the ultimate and most profound human foundation."⁷³

- [47] From his base in Breslau, Frey made extended visits to Poland in 1934 and 1938 to study Polish art and architecture, where he was given privileged access not only to public collections, but also to private holdings such as the collection of the central Polish office for cultural heritage preservation, which was stored in Warsaw at the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Public Education.⁷⁴ Pre-prepared in this way, Frey returned to Warsaw and Cracow only weeks after the German invasion of Poland in the autumn of 1939. In a decree of 12 October 1939, Hitler had declared that all Polish works of art belonged to the German Reich, and in October and November 1939, Frey worked for five weeks for Kajetan Mühlmann, the "Sonderbeauftragten für die Erfassung der Kunst- und Kulturschätze im Generalgouvernement" (Special commissioner for the acquisition of art

⁷¹ See Beate Störckuhl, "Paradigmen und Methoden der kunstgeschichtlichen 'Ostforschung' – der 'Fall' Dagobert Frey", in: Robert Born, Alena Janatkova, and Adam S. Labuda (eds.), *Die Kunsthistoriographien in Ostmitteleuropa und der nationale Diskurs* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2004), pp. 157-158; and Christian Fuhrmeister, "Reine Wissenschaft: Art History in Germany and the Notions of 'Pure Science' and 'Objective Scholarship', 1920-1950", in Mitchell Benjamin Frank and Daniel Adler, *German Art History and Scientific Thought* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 161-177, in which the art historian Oskar Schürer is quoted in a letter dated September 1940, claiming that his monographs had "established a scholarly [or scientific] justification for the German claim to the Czech Sudetenland." (Meine [...] Bücher [...] dürfen den Anspruch erheben, der Reichspolitik vorgearbeitet zu haben durch wissenschaftliche Begründung des deutschen Anspruchs auf das Sudetenland.), *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 172 n. 6.

⁷² See, for example, Dagobert Frey, "Die Entwicklung nationaler Stile in der bildenden Kunst des Mittelalters", *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 16 (1938), pp. 1-74.

⁷³ See Beate Störckuhl, "Paradigmen und Methoden der kunstgeschichtlichen 'Ostforschung' – der 'Fall' Dagobert Frey", above note 71, p. 161, citing: Paul Pieper, *Kunstgeographie: Versuch einer Grundlegung* (Berlin: Junker & Dünnhaupt, 1936), p. 16 ("Stamm [...] die letzte und tiefste menschliche Grundlage.").

⁷⁴ Information on Frey's activities Poland from Sabine Arend, "Art Historians as Actors in Occupied Poland 1939-45", in G. Ulrich Großmann and Petra Krutisch (eds.), *The Challenge of the Object. Proceedings of the 33rd CIHA Congress* (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum [in press]). See also, Sabine Arend, *Studien zur deutschen kunsthistorischen "Ostforschung" im Nationalsozialismus – die Kunsthistorischen Institute an den (Reichs-) Universitäten Breslau und Posen und ihre Protagonisten im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Politik*, PhD Dissertation, Humboldt University Berlin, 2010; and Sabine Arend, "The Art History Section of the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in Occupied Cracow (1940-45)", *Centropa*, 9, no. 3 (September 2009), pp. 209-221.

and cultural treasures in the General Government), who was charged with listing, evaluating and confiscating all significant art works in occupied Poland.⁷⁵ Not only were the artworks stolen, but also Polish identity, as great Polish art was declared, by definition, to be German art. In this spirit, Frey published a scholarly article, "Kunstdenkmäler im besetzten Polen" (Art monuments in occupied Poland) in *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*.⁷⁶ After the war, Frey predictably argued that the sole motivation for his work in Poland was the protection and preservation of works of art, but these conservationist credentials are called into question by the significant role that he played in plundering the holdings of the National Museum in Warsaw and in pillaging art works from the Royal Palace in Warsaw in preparation for its demolition in November 1944, following the Warsaw Uprising.⁷⁷

- [48] In addition to the legitimization of art theft on grounds of ethnicity, Frey's scholarly activity in the early 1940s was also focused on English art. The result was *Englisches Wesen in der bildenden Kunst* (English character in visual art), published in 1942. This is a significant monograph, some 500 pages long, and was an important model for Pevsner's 1955 Reith Lectures, subsequently published in amended form as *The Englishness of English Art*. In a recent essay on Pevsner's enormously influential book *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, Colin Amery suggests that "his pro-Nazi sympathies from the early 1930s never surfaced after he was exiled to Britain. Like many German intellectuals he wanted to rescue his country from chaos, but in Britain he was politically discreet."⁷⁸ This is certainly true. His approach to art history, however, remained indebted to Pinder in particular and to German art historical practice in general.
- [49] This debt is clearly manifest in the relationship between Frey's monograph on Englishness in art and that of Pevsner. Pevsner acknowledges this relationship in his foreword, noting that although Frey's book was published in the middle of the war in 1942, "it is absolutely free from any hostile remarks, let alone any Nazi bias — a completely objective and indeed appreciative book, written with great acumen, sensitivity, and a remarkably wide knowledge. And it confirmed often to an amazing and almost embarrassing degree my views, the criteria I had worked out, even the examples I had chosen to illustrate them." Frey's influence becomes immediately clear with the title of Pevsner's first chapter, "The Geography of Art". Doubtless aware of the murky past of

⁷⁵ For a detailed account, see Günther Haase: *Kunstraub und Kunstschutz. Eine Dokumentation* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991), pp. 203-205.

⁷⁶ Dagobert Frey, "Kunstdenkmäler im besetzten Polen", *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 1939/40, pp. 98-103.

⁷⁷ See *Warszawa oskarża* (Warsaw accuses), (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki i Ministerstwo Odbudowy Kraju, 1945), p. 44.

⁷⁸ Colin Amery, "Nikolaus Pevsner. Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius, 1936", in: Richard Shone and Jean-Paul Stonard (eds.), *The Books that Shaped Art History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), p. 71. In subsequent, post-war editions, Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* was retitled *Pioneers of Modern Design*.

this category, particularly in the hands of Frey, Pevsner covers his flank by saying: "[...] it ought to be pointed out that geography of art is by no means nationalism in action, although some very intelligent and sensitive art historians have unquestionably made it appear so."⁷⁹ Frey would doubtless fall into this category, and Pevsner is highly ambivalent in his response to Frey's model.

- [50] As even the most cursory reading of Frey's text confirms, the claim that Frey's 1942 text was free from "any Nazi bias" is patently absurd. The nationalist agenda is absolutely clear, and Frey acknowledges as his starting point Pinder's *Vom Wesen und Werden Deutscher Formen* (On the essence and coming-into-being of German forms). The Nazi component is based on race. As Frey explains in his methodological introduction: "More important [than the geographical context] is the problem of the composition of the nation from various ethnic and racial elements and the way in which these are related. In this context not only are the racial components critical, not only the anthropological structure of the national type or the percentual ratio of ethnic types, but also their social distribution, which likewise is important for the differentiation or the assimilation of the ethnic elements and for the extent to which they contribute to cultural development. It is primarily the ethnic [*völkisch*] and racial composition that create the decisive ethnic structural form as a three-dimensional system."⁸⁰ This "system" is based on the Nazi pseudo-science of race and personality. Indeed, Frey invokes in the same introduction "Kretschmer's Constitutional Type E", a reference to the typological theories of the psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer, who proposed constitutional personality "groups". Unsurprisingly, Kretschmer became a supporting member of the SS (*Förderndes Mitglied der SS*) in 1933, signed the "Vow of Allegiance of the Professors of German Universities and High-Schools to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist State" in the same year, and was an advisor to the Nazi euthanasia programme.⁸¹
- [51] Entirely understandably in a book written in 1950s Britain, Pevsner was keen to distance himself from the wilder excesses of Frey's race theories. But rather than do this at the

⁷⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art: an Expanded and Annotated Version of the Reith Lectures Broadcast in October and November 1955* (London: Architectural Press, 1956), p. 11.

⁸⁰ Dagobert Frey, *Englisches Wesen in der bildenden Kunst* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942), p. 4 (Bedeutsamer ist das Problem der Zusammensetzung des Volkstums aus verschiedenen völkischen und rassistischen Elementen und die Art ihrer Beziehung zueinander. Dabei sind nicht nur die Rassenkomponenten an sich für das gesamte Volkstum entscheidend, nicht nur die anthropologische Struktur des Volkstypus bzw. das prozentuelle Verhältnis der Rassenkomponenten, sondern auch ihre soziale Lagerung, die ebenso für die Frage von Sonderung oder Verschmelzung der Volkselemente wie für ihren Anteil an der kulturellen Entwicklung wichtig ist. Erst völkische und rassistische Zusammensetzung und sozialer Aufbau ergeben die entscheidende völkische Strukturform als ein dreidimensionales System.).

⁸¹ Kretschmer reassured his readers in the preface to the 1941 edition of *Geniale Menschen* (Berlin, Julius Springer 1929) that "what is essentially degenerate can easily be eliminated from the hereditary line." Cited Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch 2005), p. 339 (Was im Wesentlichen entartet ist, das werden wir ruhig aus der Vererbung ausschalten können.).

outset, Pevsner waits until the very end of *The Englishness of English Art* to address this problem. In the concluding chapter, he initially defers to Frey, suggesting: "What can be said of the racial components of the English and their influence on art, has already been said in Professor Frey's book."⁸² Turning more critical, he then picks up on Frey's characterization of Hogarth: "In the case of Hogarth for instance Professor Frey says and quotes from a German anthropologist that his name is Saxon (hog-herd), but the place of his origin in Westmoreland is 'an area of the Celtic retreat', and his anthropological type and that of his sister are 'in the direction of an anglo-mediterranean type on a Celtic-West English-Welsh sub-stratum'. What is one to make of that?"⁸³ One is clearly meant to dismiss it as an absurd example of German academic systemization. In Frey's original passage, however, we are told the identity of the "German anthropologist", who is no other than Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt, a colleague from Frey's days at the University of Breslau. Rather like Kretschmer, von Eickstedt was an enthusiastic member of the Nazi party and worked with the party's Political Office of Race (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*) and for the State Office for Ethnic Groups (*Reichssippenamt*), established in 1933. Among his books are *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit* (Racial science and racial history of mankind) and *Die rassistischen Grundlagen des deutschen Volkes* (The racial foundations of the German people), both published in 1934. A year later he established the *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* (Journal of racial science). Pevsner's light-hearted dismissal of Eickstedt's racial science, as peddled by Frey, does him little credit, nor does it endorse the view that Frey's book was "free from [...] any Nazi bias." Rather unfortunately, Pevsner himself falls into the trap of racial archetypes in the *Englishness of English Art*, by explaining in an almost endearingly naïve way that there are two types of English person: long, thin and undemonstrative; and "round-faced, more agile, and more active."⁸⁴

- [52] The strongest sections in the *Englishness of English Art* are those on architecture, and Pevsner's arguments here sometimes draw very closely both on Frey's precedent and on Pevsner's unpublished text from 1933-34, "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft: Zehn Abschnitte von -----". Take, for example, the notion of the grid. In *Englisches Wesen in der bildenden Kunst*, Frey's caption to a photograph of Hardwick Hall notes the "dissolution of the wall into lattice grids, verticality, flat roof."⁸⁵ In a similar vein, Pevsner writes of Hardwick: "The elevation is of blocks pushed against blocks, and the roofs are unrelievedly flat. [...] The parts raised higher at Hardwick are strikingly like Perpendicular towers. Finally the large windows form a consistent grid."⁸⁶ Smooth facades, large

⁸² Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, above note 79, p. 184.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁵ Dagobert Frey, *Englisches Wesen in der bildenden Kunst*, above 73, p. 195. (Auflösung der Mauer in Gitterwerk, Vertikalismus, flaches Dach.).

⁸⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, above note 82, p. 95.

gridded windows, and a flat roof. These are the characteristics of early twentieth-century modernism — the Dessau Bauhaus, for example — and Pevsner notes that "the conceit of the grid is one underlying much of contemporary architecture. It should have made the acceptance of the twentieth-century style easy in England."⁸⁷ Pevsner is transferring here the hopes that he had once harboured for a modernist architecture in National Socialist Germany to his new homeland, England; hopes for an austere, undecorated and socially-committed architecture. No longer, however, will this architecture resemble "countless columns marching in step". Instead, it will consciously free itself of artificial constraint. As Pevsner advises by the mid-1950s: "If English planners forget about the straight axes and the artificially symmetrical facades of the academy, and design functionally and Englishly, they will succeed."⁸⁸

[53] This optimism was based on the postwar public architecture in England, and Pevsner concludes his penultimate chapter with a list of exciting new developments, which includes the 1951 Festival of Britain on the south bank of the Thames, the design by Hugh Casson and Neville Condor for the arts precinct in Cambridge, the LCC and Holford plans for the Barbican, and "in the flesh as it were — certain parts of Harlow New Town by Mr. Frederick Gibberd and several LCC housing estates designed by Dr. J. Leslie Martin and his department." This architecture and these ideas, Pevsner admits, still has to win the battle against shortsightedness and ignorance, but his advocacy is intended to support the cause by showing how firmly the new design language is rooted in English architectural history. Far from being "outlandish", he concludes: "It has, I hope, been demonstrated how thoroughly inlandish they are".⁸⁹ The modernism that had been depicted by Pevsner in 1934 as essentially German, had now become archetypically English.

[54] A final question remains: why is Pevsner so significant and fascinating for the British? Although long established as the nation's favourite scholarly uncle, he became the target in the 1970s of acrimonious attacks from the advocates of "individualism" both on the conservative right and among liberal postmodernists.⁹⁰ High modernist architecture, somehow, had become Pevsner's fault. More recently, two major biographies have been published, tracing his life and intellectual development in minute detail. Several reasons explain his preeminence. The first, very obviously, is his extraordinary industry. As the bibliography generously made available online by Susie Harries confirms, he was unbelievably driven and productive.⁹¹ Not only was he prolific in his scholarship, but also

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁹⁰ See, for example, David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); and Timothy Mowl, *Stylistic Cold Wars: Betjeman versus Pevsner* (London: John Murray, 2000).

⁹¹ <http://www.pevsnerinfo.cswebsites.org/default.aspx?page=27392> (accessed 16 October 2013).

professionally educated in the German tradition of *Kunstgeschichte*, which contrasted very markedly in its thoroughness with the world of antiquarianism, *belles lettres*, and connoisseurship that had previously defined architectural history in Britain. Pevsner's precarious position as an exile had, nevertheless, a particular power. For as Flusser argues, the arrival of the exile "allows the natives to discover that they can only 'identify' themselves in relationship to him". Pevsner fits exactly into the paradigm, explicating to the British for the first time in a systematic manner the richness of the native architectural tradition. In the "Buildings of England" series and in such texts as the *Englishness of English Art*, he "threatens", in Flusser's paradigm, the "particularity" of the native and questions it in his alienness. This is the vital function of the outsider as insider.

- [55] Pevsner also operated at the epicentre of a highly creative polemical dialogue, leading, in Flusser's terms, to a "synthesis of new information". This synthesis between different and sometimes diverse cultures was particularly vibrant in late 1930s Britain in the realm of modernist architecture. A snapshot of this vitality is offered by the *Architectural Review*, which in 1937, for example, published projects built in Britain by such local talents as Grey Wornum, Maxwell Fry, F. R. S. Yorke, Raymond McGrath, Wells Coates, and Frederick Gibberd, and by immigrants such as Misha Black, Ernő Goldfinger, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Erich Mendelsohn, Serge Chermayeff, and Berthold Lubetkin. Further enriching this brilliant cocktail, it published reviews of such outstanding modernist buildings as Luigi Moretti's fencing academy in Rome, flats in Milan by Terragni and Lingeri, Hans Scharoun's Schminke House in Löbau, and several houses in California by Richard Neutra and R. M. Schindler. Add theatre designs by Frederick Kiesler and six articles on colour by Ozenfant, and the mix is rich indeed. Not only is it rich, it is correspondingly difficult to explicate. Versed in both the continental and British contexts, Pevsner was ideally suited to offer a narrative and to challenge his reader to take a position. The first instalment appeared in 1936 as *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, significantly subtitled *from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. As Christopher Long has noted: "In Pevsner's writings, the heady problems of art become vignettes about which one could make judgments and take positions. His prose is always a splendid amalgam of careful erudition, remarkable insight, scholarly conjecture, and unfettered opinion. To read Pevsner is to enter immediately into a dialogue, at times comfortable and affirming, at others, annoying and off-putting."⁹² This is precisely the "dialogical disposition" that, according to Flusser, is brought by the exile to the guest culture.⁹³

⁹² Christopher Long, review of Stephen Games, *Pevsner — The Early Life: Germany and Art*, above note 67.

⁹³ Pevsner's insider/outsider role was officially acknowledged when he was sent back to Germany from July to December 1946 as the leader of a delegation charged by the British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee to report on the state of German product design in the British and American zones of occupation. See Nikolaus Pevsner and others, *Geheimreport Deutsches Design. Deutsche Konsumgüter im Visier des britischen Council of Industrial Design (1946)*, ed. Anne

[56] Pevsner was never a Nazi, nor was he explicitly anti-semitic in his writings. Even at his most nationalistic, in "Kunst der Gegenwart", the nearest he came to anti-Semitism was a jibe against the undifferentiated coupling of Jewishness and the avant-garde: "One thing you cannot accuse German Expressionism of: they are certainly not rootless metropolitan creatures of an international habitus. That is proven both by their origins — whether like Nolde they come from old, free farming stock, or like the painters of 'Die Brücke', Dix, and so many more, who come from the working classes — and also by their impact."⁹⁴ In a similar spirit, the simple conflation of conservatism, nationalism, and National Socialism that often marks historical accounts of nineteenth and early twentieth-century German culture should also be questioned and resisted. While the advocates of cultural conservatism undoubtedly prepared the way in many respects for the ideology of National Socialism, the two were in no way identical, and adherence to the former did not demand deference to the latter. Pinder, for example, while publicly praising the "Führer", never joined the National Socialist Party.⁹⁵ He rejected Alfred Rosenberg's suggestion, made in 1932, that they should work together, and in 1933 spoke out against the dismissal from their posts of such leading art historians as Ludwig Justi in Berlin and Georg Swarzenski in Frankfurt.⁹⁶ In the case of Pinder, the need for a more subtle and more differentiated approach has been argued by the Dutch art historian Marlite Halbertsma:

"There are also conspicuous differences between German conservative thinking and National Socialism. The conservatives were driven primarily by a cultural view. For them it was a matter of saving those things that they regarded as important German values. According to the conservative view, the state is not so much an institution of power as an ethical institution, a value in itself [*Wert-an-sich*]. To think in biological and racial terms is alien to conservatism. Instances of antisemitism in the writings of conservatives are not to be found, or only in isolated instances. Ultimately, the cultural worldview of the conservatives is non-material and anti-material, and for that reason it is barely able to incorporate biological ideas. Theirs is an idealistic and 'spiritual' view of history, in the sense of German idealism."⁹⁷

Sudrow (*Deutsches Museum. Abhandlungen und Berichte — Neue Folge*, vol. 28) (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012). Less seriously, the insider/outsider role was perfectly captured, if inadvertently, in the columns of the satirical magazine *Private Eye*, whose mythically inept football team, Neasden F.C. was invariably defeated by an enormous margin thanks to own goals scored by the veteran striker, "Baldy" Pevsner.

⁹⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft", above note 15, section 7 (Denn Eines darf man den deutschen Expressionisten gewiss nicht vorwerfen: Entwurzelte Großstadtkreaturen von internationalem Habitus sind sie wahrhaftig nicht. Das beweist sowohl ihre Abkunft, ob sie nun wie Nolde aus altem freien Bauergeschlecht oder wie die Maler der "Brücke", Dix und so viele andere aus dem Arbeiterstände kommen, — als auch ihre Wirkung.).

⁹⁵ Pinder's membership of the National Socialist Party is disputed, see Marlite Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte* (Worms: Werner, 1992), pp. 172 and 176; and Birte Pusback, "'Because Architecture is Moral!' Wilhelm Pinder and National Socialism", *Centropa*, 9, no. 3 (September 2009), pp. 197-208.

⁹⁶ See Horst Bredekamp, "Wilhelm Pinder", in Horst Bredekamp and Adam S. Labuda (eds.), *In der Mitte Berlins: 200 Jahre Kunstgeschichte an der Humboldt-Universität* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2010), p. 298.

[57] This reading, applied by Halbertsma to Pinder, is equally applicable to Pevsner. Pevsner came to Britain as a German nationalist with a firm commitment to communitarianism. Before the demonic intentions of the NSDAP became clear, he saw Hitler's revolutionary party as a vehicle for both of these convictions. His goal, as stated in "Kunst der Gegenwart und Kunst der Zukunft", was a twentieth century universalism "as strong and healthy as that of the high Middle Ages."⁹⁸ This universalism was driven for Pevsner, as it had been for the architects of *Neues Bauen* in the Germany of the 1920s, by the need to accommodate the broader population in adequate housing. This is precisely the argument that Pevsner made in his 1931 review in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*. Noting that 1 million dwellings were needed in France and a further 1.1 million in Germany, he asked: "Under these conditions, does not every issue pale before this one: how can good, practical, cheap, and yet not soulless houses be created for these millions seeking homes?"⁹⁹ The push for better housing was led during the Weimer Republic by the Social Democratic Party and by the trades' unions. Paradoxically, however, the high hopes that had been pinned to the communitarian and democratic processes of city planning and architecture in the 1920s became attached in 1933 and 1934 to the new, National Socialist regime. Displaced from his native culture, however, architectural modernism did not bind Pevsner, as his conservative critics have suggested, to fascism and communism and certainly not to nationalism, but offered instead a communitarian, supra-national alternative. For the exile scholar, home was neither Germany nor England, but the architectural response to the universal need for shelter and community. As Wolfgang Pehnt elegantly concludes in his epilogue to the German edition of *Pioneers of Modern Design*:

"For Pevsner, the connection between the German present and the English past must have meant a reconciliation, which his own biography had prevented. [...] The greater part of his imposing life's work [...] was an attempt to come to terms with the art of his host country and thus also an attempt to make exile accessible as his own living space. It was 'emigrant literature', as Julius Posener (who should know) dubbed his *European Architecture*. In this respect, *Pioneers* achieved even more: it tied the destiny of the new home to that of the old 'Heimat', and

⁹⁷ Marlite Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte*, above note 95, p. 163 (Es gibt auch auffällige Unterschiede zwischen dem deutschen konservativen Denken und dem Nationalsozialismus. Die Konservativen werden in erster Linie von einer kulturellen Anschauung getrieben. Es geht ihnen um die Rettung dessen, was sie als wichtige deutsche Werte ansehen. Der Staat ist nach der konservativen Auffassung nicht so sehr eine Institution der Macht, sondern eine sittliche Institution, ein Wert-an-sich. Das Denken in biologisch-rassistischen Begriffen ist dem Konservatismus fremd. Antisemitismus findet man in den Schriften von Konservativen gar nicht oder nur vereinzelt. Das kulturelle Weltbild der Konservativen ist letztlich unstofflich und antimateriell, und es kann biologische Ideen daher kaum in sich aufnehmen. Ihre Auffassung von Geschichte ist eine idealistische, 'geistige', im Sinne des deutschen Idealismus.).

⁹⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Kunst der Gegenwart", above note 15, section 3 ([...] stark und gesund wie der des hohen Mittelalters.). See above note 63 for the full quotation.

⁹⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner, review of "Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. Ihr gesamtes Werk von 1910 bis 1929", *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, above note 19, p. 311 (Hat unter diesen Umständen nicht jede Frage vor derjenigen zurückzutreten, wie für diese Millionen von Wohnungssuchenden gute, praktische, billige und doch nicht unbeseelte Wohnungen geschaffen werden können?).

expressed the conviction that the better, the true spirit of the lost native land will prevail."¹⁰⁰

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¹⁰⁰ Wolfgang Pehnt, "Nachwort", in: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Wegbereiter moderner Formgebung* (Cologne: DuMont, 1983), p. 244 (Für Pevsner muß die Verbindung deutscher Gegenwart mit englischer Vergangenheit eine Versöhnung bedeutet haben, die ihm die eigene Biographie verweigert hat. [...] Ein großer Teil seines imposanten Lebenswerkes [...] war eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Kunst des Gastlandes und damit auch ein Versuch, sich das Exil als eigenen Lebensraum zu erschließen. Es war 'Emigrantenliteratur', wie Julius Posener, der es wissen mußte, Pevsners *European Architecture* genannt hat. Die *Pioneers* leisteten in dieser Hinsicht noch mehr: Sie verknüpften das Schicksal der neuen mit dem der alten Heimat, und sie drückten die Überzeugung aus, daß sich der bessere, der wahre Geist des verlorenen Vaterlandes durchsetzen werde.).